The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Women Ambassadors Series

AMBASSADOR ELINOR CONSTABLE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: This is an interview with Ambassador Elinor Constable. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, could you tell me when and where you were born, and something about your family?

CONSTABLE: I was born in San Diego, California at Mercy Hospital on the 8th of February 1934. We were there because my father was a Naval officer.

Q: In those times he was a professional Naval officer.

CONSTABLE: He was very much a professional Naval officer.

Q: What was your maiden name?

CONSTABLE: His name was Marshall Greer, and we could spend the whole morning on him. Let me give you 60 seconds about him.

Q: Sure.

CONSTABLE: Because I think a lot of what I am comes from him. He was born in North Carolina in 1896, and then moved to eastern Kentucky. He had 15 siblings (several died young), went to a one-room school. While he was in high school he decided he wanted to be a Naval officer. He got a bus to Washington, DC, marched into the office of one of the two Kentucky senators, and said, "Hello, my name" (probably in a thick accent in those days) "My name is Marshall Greer, and I want to go to the Naval Academy, and I want you to give me an appointment." And by God, he got it and he went to the Naval Academy.

Q: What class?

CONSTABLE: He graduated in the class of 1919, and became a Naval aviator. He was a very dashing young fellow, and apparently quite a character. He didn't do terribly well in his studies, and acquired a nickname, the way you did in those days. He fell asleep during a class but woke up just before the end and decided to show that he'd been paying attention by asking a question, but asked the question on the wrong subject entirely, and his friends called him Dopey from then on. He married a young woman from Scranton, Pennsylvania. After she died, he met my mother, I guess in the early '30s. She came from up-state New York from a very different kind of a family, born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Her father, Francis Jackson French, invented the yellow French's mustard that we put on hot dogs, literally invented it in his laboratory. She was the third of three daughters, much younger than my father. They married in 1932. I was born in 1934 and spent my childhood traveling around the world. My father was a bit of a hero during the Second World War fighting German submarines in the Atlantic as commander of an aircraft carrier, and then moving to the Pacific where he commanded a carrier division. At the very end of the war, he was the officer on Tinian who signed the final release for the Enola Gay.

Q: Which is the plane that dropped the atomic bomb.

CONSTABLE: So I grew up all over the world, went to 14 schools.

Q: A real Navy junior. I can relate to that because my brother who is ten years older than I am was the class of '40 in the Naval Academy, and we moved to Annapolis and I was a teenager from Annapolis so I grew up as sort of a quasi-Navy junior.

CONSTABLE: And I swore I would never travel again.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

CONSTABLE: I have a half-sister from my father's first marriage. And a brother, two and a half years younger, who was in the Navy for a while and now works with one of these local consulting firms.

Q: Did you go to several high schools?

CONSTABLE: Well, it has always been hard to keep track. When I add it all up it's something like 14 schools. I kept skipping and repeating grades. When I was in the eighth grade at the National Cathedral School here in Washington, we transferred to San Francisco, but not the nice part of San Francisco. We lived in a...and I'm not making this up, in a Quonset hut in Alameda, and I went to Alameda high school skipping the second half of the eighth grade. Then we moved to Coronado near San Diego and I skipped the second half of ninth grade. Then we left and went to Hawaii where I attended Punahou in the eleventh grade. At that point we moved again and I said, "Enough. I am not going with you." That's the first time I can remember really putting my foot down, although I must have done it occasionally earlier. So I stayed and actually finished two whole years at the same high school.

Q: At Punahou.

CONSTABLE: At Punahou. It's a very famous secondary school, a wonderful place.

Q: Oh, yes. I had a cousin who went there.

CONSTABLE: I'm going out there for my 45th reunion next week.

Q: You graduated from Punahou when?

CONSTABLE: 1951.

Q: Then what struck your eye? What did you want to do?

CONSTABLE: I had no idea. I had no defined ambitions. I wanted to go to college. It was assumed that we would go to college. The purpose was not clear. My mother never graduated from high school. My mother was a legendary beauty, and also quite a character. She was about 20, I guess, when she married my father. She went to Dobbs School in New York. But she either quit or got kicked out, I'm not sure. She was always a bit of a trouble maker, and didn't like school. But she was extremely intelligent. Much later she was Walter Lippmann's favorite dinner partner.

Q: Walter Lippmann being a very famous commentator.

CONSTABLE: So I had no image of what I would be beyond getting married and having children which is what 1951 women were supposed to do. My parents had selected Bryn Mawr for me because my father knew some people in Pennsylvania. And how the world has changed. College is now very competitive and you're lucky if you can get in to one of your first five choices. In 1951, on the other hand, I only applied to a single college and it never occurred to me that I wouldn't get in. But I decided I didn't want to go to Bryn Mawr because a history teacher at Punahou said, "You don't want to go to Bryn Mawr." So I said, "Oh, okay." No analysis, nothing. He said, "Wellesley is a wonderful college. Why don't you go there?" "Oh, all right." So I applied to Wellesley and I told my father. He said, "Well, get yourself in." So I said, "All right," and did.

In my freshman year at Wellesley I took a course in political science. I didn't know what political science was, and I don't even know why I took the course. I assumed I would be an English major, or a history major. It was taught by a woman named Pauline Tomkins, who was eased out because she was viewed as too liberal. Remember this was the McCarthy era, but Tomkins was a great influence on me. On the basis of that single course I decided to major in political science. In my sophomore year I took a course in international relations, and that was it for the rest of my life. And I knew that one way or another I was going to stay interested in this field, although not as a professional. I had absolutely no thought of ever being a professional. I was going to get married and have children.

Q: You were going to get your MRS degree.

CONSTABLE: Absolutely. But as luck would have it, I didn't have a serious man in my life at the time so I had to work.

Q: I'd just like to get a little bit about the mood at Wellesley. In international relations, what was the thing that people were focusing on? Do you remember? The reason I say this, I went to Williams and I graduated in the class of '50, and we were really looking at the United Nations as being...this is brand new. I went in in '46 and graduated in '50, and I had people like Joseph Johnson as one of my teachers. So a whole new world was going to come up. I'm just wondering. You're a half generation later. What was pushing?

CONSTABLE: We were still very idealistic. I don't want to speak for the whole generation, although I do believe that in the early to mid-'50s a lot of us thought that the United States had a responsibility and obligation, a mission even, to be involved with the rest of the world in some constructive and healthy way. We also thought we had the capacity and the ability to make things better. This is what motivated me to join the Foreign Service when I did. As I look back our thinking was pretty sloppy; it has changed a good deal now. I remember at Wellesley studying about South Asia and the great new democracy that was India, which had just achieved independence in 1947, Nehru was prime minister, and there were no warts there. We had the same sense about emerging nations in Africa, with the end of the colonial era which had been unambiguously bad, the emergence of independent states which were unambiguously good, and we would be there helping out.

My senior year at Wellesley I took a course in African studies. I've forgotten the title, I think it was something utterly absurd like The History of Africa. But it was taught by an a brilliant generalist with the ability to convey a sense of excitement and wonder about almost anything. (I saw him about five years ago, he's just written a book on China and I told him how much that course had influenced me over the years. And he said, "It's embarrassing now because I was the professor in the history department for Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.") I had become rather interested in Ghana, and particularly the Ashanti, so I decided to do my paper on Ghana's independence struggle. Went into Boston University which at that time had the best collection of original materials on Africa.

Q: They still do have a specialty on Africa.

CONSTABLE: Right, and in those days they were the only one in the area. And I started rummaging around and I was just astonished at what I discovered, which flew in the face of the way we were all thinking. In order to consolidate his own political power Nkrumah systemically destroyed the Ashanti. They were crushed as a political force because he viewed them as a threat. I found this quite disillusioning. But I wrote a paper, I still have it somewhere in a trunk. I've always wanted to pull it out and reread it. As a result some of the scales fell from my eyes, and as I've watched events unfold in different parts of the world, I have always thought about the Ashanti. [And recently, I don't want to digress, but you] remember in 1986 there was a series on public television about Africa, narrated by Ali Mazrui, a Kenyan professor from Mombasa.

Q: I remember the series.

CONSTABLE: He had a segment on Nkrumah whom he described as an unblemished national hero. I thought, "My goodness, where is history?"

Q: I think to put things in perspective, Nkrumah had been educated in the United States. At the time you were writing was considered all the best and brightest of Africa. He was the darling of the universities. So you're doing this...you were going against the tide at that time.

CONSTABLE: I was going against my own attitudes. But that didn't stop me. I still had stars in my eyes. I still wanted to get involved some way. But I hadn't figured out how. I thought I wanted to be in government. In those days there was a program called the Management Intern Program involving a relatively rigorous written exam, and an oral. The objective was to recruit the brightest college graduates one could find for positions in Washington. As I look back on it now, I wonder why we weren't paying attention. All of the men went to OMB or the Defense Department. The handful of women who got through this process, and I was the only member of the graduating class of Wellesley who passed, went to personnel. Sound familiar?

Q: For somebody who is reading this in later times, personnel was kind of women's work in that period.

CONSTABLE: I had no particular career ambitions. My idea was to work at something that was interesting and fun. I didn't want to be a secretary. That was the other thing women were supposed to be, and I would make a terrible secretary. Everything that makes a good secretary good, attention to detail, efficiency...I'd be terrible in all that. And the notion that this was what every woman was destined to be, was nuts. And I refused to do that. I came to Washington while they were processing the exam and started job hunting.

First question, can you type? And I said, "No," which wasn't entirely true. I could type pretty well. But I said, "No, I couldn't." "Well, you women get out of college and you think you can just come down here and get a good job. If you're not going to type, we don't want you." It was quite something.

After I passed the exam I was offered a job working in employee relations at the U.S. Geological Survey. Now that sounds as if it would be interesting. I was assigned to the incentive awards program, and my job was to process all of the employees' suggestions that came in. I remember one vividly about toilet paper. If you put in really poor quality toilet paper you could save money. Anyway, we rejected that particular suggestion. I was in an office with six women-two secretaries and four personnel technicians-supervised by two men. A frustrated ballet dancer who did not enjoy his job, and a golfer. It was not a stimulating environment.

I'd been there about a month, when the sixth member of the team arrived. She took one look around-I think on the second day-and said, "Elinor, how can you stand this?" [She said, "Elinor, how can you stand this?"] And I said it was not much fun, but it's a job. "Oh, you need to get out right now, right now." We talked about our interests and she said, "Why don't you join the Foreign Service?" I said, "I can't join the Foreign Service. They don't take women." People who read this are going to say, "That doesn't sound like the Elinor Constable we know." But the odds were overwhelming in 1955. But she talked me into taking the exam. She said, "What have you got to lose? Preparing for the exam and taking it will be interesting and if they don't take you, so what?" She had been a Foreign Service secretary to Ellis Briggs and had decided to become a lawyer. She ultimately became a judge in California. So I took the Foreign Service exam, and I passed the written exam with flying colors.

In the meantime I had decided I wanted to go to graduate school and study East Asian studies, Chinese or Japanese. I wanted to go to Harvard. But I took the Foreign Service oral which I remember vividly.

Q: Could you talk about the Foreign Service oral? Because I try to capture the spirit of the times.

CONSTABLE: Well, the written is a bit of a blur. I remember it as a good old fashioned intelligence test. And then in the oral you were tested on your knowledge. But you were also tested on a lot of other things, not all of them germane. How you handled yourself. How you behaved under stress. I can't remember whether I smoked at the time or not, but there was a story, perhaps apocryphal, that sometimes they would take all of the ashtrays out of the room. The smoker would come in and, of course, if you're nervous, you really want a cigarette. It was perfectly acceptable socially in those days to smoke anywhere, but no ashtray. What does the candidate do? Some young men would use their trouser cuff, some would just try not to smoke. The way you passed that test was to calmly ask for an ashtray. But they didn't do that to me. They asked a lot of questions but I frankly didn't feel that I did that well.

They asked me, for example, the origin of the name Pakistan, which I had forgotten. And I remember answering by saying something like, "It's interesting the way newly independent countries identify the name that they want to use." And then gave four other examples that I did happen to know, and never got around to Pakistan. Then they asked that tired, tired old question: if a foreigner, that was the term used, asked you to recommend ten books about the United States, which ten books would you pick? And I said, "If a foreigner asked me that question, the first thing I would do would be to go to my library. I would tell them, let me think about this and I'll put something together for you." "Yes, but Miss Greer...I guess they called me Miss, Ms wasn't in use then...what books would you recommend?" I said, "I wouldn't recommend anything off the top of my head because you've got to put together a balanced list. If you're going to give them Faulkner, then you have to give them something that is more positive and up-beat. If you're going to give them F. Scott Fitzgerald, then you've got to do something else, you want a good balance." "Well, but what would you give them?" And I said, "I'm not going to tell you." Then one of them said, "We just want to find out what you know about American literature." And I said, "Why don't you ask me about American literature?" They didn't, they moved on to something else. I mean, I was insufferable. I don't know why they took me. I would describe the process as extremely patronizing, particularly towards a woman, and subjective. Anything you felt like asking.

I was nervous but I had not decided whether I really wanted to be in the Foreign Service. So this was not a terribly stressful situation. I had prepared for the interview. I had never gone to graduate school. I had about five or six sessions with a loveable, eccentric old fellow who lived in Georgetown with ten cats. He would coach you for a little bit and then he would set up a mock oral. It probably helped me because after the mock oral, the evaluation was: Miss Greer, you are very snotty. I don't think they used that word, but it was something like that. You need to tone down a little bit, and try to be a little nicer. So I probably did try to tone down a little bit.

In those days they offered you an appointment on the spot. They asked when I would be available and I said, "Gee, I don't know. I haven't decided whether I want to do this or not." Wrong answer, especially for a woman. Definitely the wrong answer. But I told them I'd let them know. Fortunately, Harvard didn't accept me. They said they only took Ph.D. candidates but I was never sure that was the reason.

Q: I know, because I'd gotten out of the service in '54 and went to Harvard to see about getting a Master's degree, and they looked down their noses at me and said, one, we only take maggies, this magna cum laude. And we only take people for Ph.D.s. And I said, thank you very much, and I trotted across the Charles and got a Master's at Boston University in a year, and went into the Foreign Service. So I know how Harvard was at that time.

CONSTABLE: I assume it was a straight answer but it was lucky for me because I then said, okay, I'll come into the Foreign Service.

Q: Did anybody in the Foreign Service give you any idea of the attitude towards women? I mean, well, if you come in you know this or that, or that type of thing, or not?

CONSTABLE: This is a little hazy. It's hard to put myself back in 1955 in terms of women's issues. Again, to put this in context, in 1955 the women's movement as such did not exist. The books that everybody talks about now were written in the '60s and early '70s. The Feminine Mystique and all of those. You didn't think about women's issues. You thought about the situation in a more particular way as an individual dealing with a specific issue. I have to confess I was a little bit naive about it. I don't know whether this was my father's character that I carried with me. I mean, a kid who'd get on a bus and go to a senator's office and say, "Send me to the Naval Academy." I've always had a bit of that in me. I just assumed that you would be accepted as the person you were. And if you were smart, people would treat you as if you were smart. And if you weren't then you'd get different treatment. If you were skilled in something, you'd get to do it, and if you weren't, etc. The "can you type, and if you can't, we aren't interested," came as a bit of surprise. And it made me angry.

When I joined the Foreign Service I think I must have known...I certainly knew by the statistics that it wasn't a woman's institution, and that people in positions of power were all white men. But I wasn't really looking for a career. In those days that was heresy.

Q: Usually when you join, you're a lifer.

CONSTABLE: It's your life. Today, everyone is expected to move around a lot more. I wasn't looking for a spouse. I didn't know what I was looking for. I cared about international issues and I was looking forward to working in this area. I did say when I was offered the appointment that I would not work in personnel or consular affairs. A little cheeky of me. Admin in those days was separate, and consular was relatively separate. But female Foreign Service officers were usually assigned to personnel, and I just said, no, that I will not do. But I said I'd do anything else, and I wanted to go overseas, desperately wanted to go overseas. I thought that was going to be glamorous.

Q: People weren't going overseas in those days very much, unless you had money you just didn't go.

CONSTABLE: If the Peace Corps had existed in 1955, I would have been a Peace Corps volunteer. But no, I was assigned to Washington, to the Economic Bureau.

Q: Did you take the basic officer's course?

CONSTABLE: Yes, at the old FSI in some temporary Navy buildings that have since been torn down. The first session was at approximately 9:00 on the 31st of January 1957, and I remember that day vividly because I sat down next to this gorgeous man, Peter Constable. I had trouble getting through the course. We've been married for 38 years now. I was just so smitten it was pathetic. In those days it was a three month course. They tried to cover everything including the kitchen sink. Once a woman briefed us on immigration and naturalization procedures. A man raised his hand and said, "After you come into the United States, if you're not a citizen, you're not a legal immigrant, what happens?" "What do you mean, what happens?" "Well, you just let them all run around loose?" We all fell off our chairs.

I recollect, perhaps incorrectly, a fairly high touchy feely quotient. There was a wonderful session which we mocked for the rest of our lives: a psychiatrist or sociologist was describing some common truths about how important relationships are. He drew a circle on the blackboard, put a dot in the center, and he said, "This is you, and this is your circle of confirming others. And everyone needs a circle of confirming others." And that has stayed with us for however many years its been. We thought that was just hysterical. By then I was totally smitten and it was painful almost for me to be in this course with Peter. But I still asked to be assigned overseas.

Q: How big was your class?

CONSTABLE: Maybe 40, something like that.

Q: We're talking about '57.

CONSTABLE: 1957. Larry Eagleburger was a member of our class. I never would have figured Larry Eagleburger to become the first career Foreign Service officer Secretary of State.

Q: What happened?

CONSTABLE: When we completed the course, we were given our assignments and Peter and I were both assigned to the Department. I was assigned to the Economic Bureau and given a job which today I wouldn't want to do. At that point I was willing to do everything, I still had stars in my eyes. And again, it was one of these things where there was a certain subtle separation-an awkward phrase, an all female office. It eventually had a man or two assigned to it. Our responsibility was to produce a newsletter on economic issues every two weeks. There was also a daily summary with five or six lines about economic events around the world, and the biweekly would have longer articles. I did that until I left to have a baby. I did not leave when I got married.

A month or so before we were married, I was summoned to the Executive Director's office in EB. The Executive Director in those days...she was the same person when I came back into the Foreign Service in 1973, was a legendary figure by the name of Frances Wilson. Everybody knows about Frances.

Q: A very important person. Sort of the guru of the economic bureau.

CONSTABLE: A wonderful woman actually, but a little bit overwhelming. Anyway, Frances had invited me to her office. We were all terrified of Frances, but she congratulated me on my engagement, and I was touched. My goodness, how nice. And then she said, "When do you plan to resign Miss Greer?" And I said, "I don't plan to resign." Now, I have to tell you, I was quaking inside. But I had heard about this "requirement", that female Foreign Service officers had to resign when they got married, no matter who they married, foreigner, American, Foreign Service officer, it didn't matter. You had to resign. She looked at me quite severely, I mean you did not say no to Frances Wilson. And no women had ever done this, in the history of the Foreign Service. I said, "You can't force me to resign. If you want me out of the Foreign Service, you have to fire me." Wow! She said, "Miss Greer, you are required to resign." And I said, "Show me the regulation. Show me the law. Where is it?" Well, there wasn't one. This came as a shock. I was quite prepared for her to pull out a book, and show me some regulation, and at that point I would fight it as far as I could. There was none. There was no regulation. It was custom, plain old custom, buttressed by two practical limitations. One, you did not have to grant maternity leave to women in those days. So you had in effect choose between family and work. And second, there was a restriction on the books about family members working together at the same post. So, again, you would have to choose, and if your spouse was sent to Mexico City, you couldn't go there, and the Department would not lift a finger to help you out. They would probably, just to show you, send you off to Burma. And in those days transportation was difficult. So this was not something you would do lightly. But we were in Washington, and I said, this makes no sense. I am not going to be a different person after I am married. Nothing is going to change. And I am going to continue to do this job. Well, she had a fit. "I'll have to go check on this." "Fine, you go check on this." I was very calm externally, but thinking, "Elinor, what have you done." I think even Peter was a little nervous about this. But we wanted the second income, and I liked what I was doing. And it just didn't make sense.

Maybe other oral histories will illuminate this. Allegedly the issue was taken to the Secretary, then John Foster Dulles. Personally, I don't believe this, but it obviously went up fairly high. And the answer came back. "Well, okay, you don't have to resign. But you have to submit a letter of resignation without a date." So I did that. I suppose I could have refused to submit the letter. But one of the things about negotiating is, you've got to recognize the deal. When you've got it, take it. We got married. We took a short honeymoon, and I went back to work. And then, of course, we started our family right away, and there was no such thing as maternity leave, so at that point I did resign.

Now, just an interesting footnote. The following year, or later that year, another young woman joined the Foreign Service, Melissa Foelsch. She married, but was not asked to resign. Years later, when I got to know her better, we were trading stories and she said, "You know, they never asked me to resign, and that was amazing." She chose a different path, which was to have a child and do it on a combination of annual leave and a little bit of sick leave, and come right back to work. I wouldn't have had the physical stamina to do that. And then she and her husband, then a Foreign Service officer, took separate assignments. They eventually got divorced but they got back together again. But she never left the Service, ever. It was interesting.

Q: She was Melissa Foelsch Wells.

CONSTABLE: She has been ambassador to Mozambique, Zaire, UN, she's now in Brazil as Consul General in Sao Paulo. But it was just an amazing episode. But then I was quite content to resign and have a baby and accompany Peter overseas. I didn't know myself well enough at the time. We had two tours abroad before we came back to Washington.

Q: Where did you serve?

CONSTABLE: Our first overseas post was Vigo, Spain, [and gosh, that just feels like ancient history.] In Washington, Peter was assigned to the Public Correspondence branch which was part of Public Affairs, which some years later was moved over to USIS out of the State Department. He moved up to be chief of the division at the end of the second year, in charge of answering correspondence, and I'm sure he put this story in his oral history, I hope he did. In late '58 or early '59, there was a dust-up over Quemoy and Matsu islands off mainland China. And the Chinese were doing a little saber rattling, and we were responding with some rather aggressive rhetoric. It was making people nervous. A New York Times reporter by the name of E.W. Kenworthy called Peter, and asked if he could come and interview him about how the mail was going. Peter checked with his boss, and his boss said yes, sure. Peter said, "What do I tell him?" "Well, just tell him the truth," which Peter did. The next day there was a headline in the New York Times, "80% of the American public opposes Dulles' policy on Quemoy-Matsu." Well, it wasn't quite right. Some people opposed the saber rattling, some people opposed the rhetoric, some people thought we should be more aggressive, some people didn't care. It was more complicated than the headline. But the headline captured attention. This was a Saturday. Everybody had left town for the weekend, and the only person that the reporters could find was one Richard M. Nixon.

Q: He was Vice President.

CONSTABLE: The Vice President of the United States, who said, "Well, anybody who says that has to be a traitor." There was a banner headline in The Washington Post the next day: "Nixon accuses State Department official of treason." So we started looking at other careers. But the upshot was interesting. Peter was called in, explained what had happened, and the Department backed him all the way, refusing to release his name. Drew Pearson who wrote the predecessor of what is Jack Anderson's column today, also had a radio show, and he somehow got Peter's name. This was harder to do in those days. If something like this happened today, the Foreign Service officer's name would be in the hands of the press in an hour. Back in 1958 you actually could keep things quiet. He released it on his radio show, describing Peter as a "well-meaning young Foreign Service officer from up-state New York." We didn't like the "well-meaning" part. But it died down and Peter's career never suffered, which was a miracle.

At the end of our Washington tour we were posted to Lima, Peru. We were thrilled. In those days you had nothing to say about where you went, absolutely nothing. You saluted, and you went. About ten days later the word came down from personnel, no, we're changing Lima, you're going to Vigo. We were embarrassed. We didn't know what continent Vigo was on. Vigo turned out to be a small two person consulate in the northwest section of Galicia Spain. It's been closed for decades. It existed then because Francisco Franco, who was then dictator of Spain, came from a town called El Ferrol, which was not far from Vigo. So, politically it had some significance. Communications were very cumbersome then, and you actually had to gather information on the spot. The other reason why Vigo was important to us was that Vigo Bay was the center of the wolfram trade during World War II.

Q: Wolfram [wolframite] being part of steel, or something?

CONSTABLE: I guess. I'm a diplomat, I don't know anything about steel.

Q: All I know is that our whole policy with Spain during World War II revolved around this thing called wolfram, which I've never heard of before or since.

CONSTABLE: And Vigo Bay was where it came in. The third reason we had a post there, this is really ancient history, was because there were a lot of American citizens of Spanish origin who had retired in Vigo, who had Social Security checks which had to be processed individually at the consulate and sent to them. That's like horse and buggy. As the war receded, as communications improved, as the need to process these checks diminished, the post became less and less important. But it was our introduction to the Foreign Service.

I had an epiphany in viso which I've tried to share with my colleagues ever since, and it's not peculiar to the Foreign Service. I hated Vigo with a passion the first year I was there. Absolutely hated, loathed, and despised it. It was rainy. Sunny Spain? Not Vigo. It rained all the time. We had a small apartment that was on the first floor, and it hung out over a trolley line. The trolleys ran from 5:00 a.m., and when they went by the window of our bedroom the whole place shook. It was built into the side of a little hill, so it was infested with all kinds of bugs. It was cold. Everything smelled of rancid oil, rotting fish and urine. Oh, it was a great place. And I was sick a lot, and had one small child who wasn't terribly well, and I was trapped in this apartment. I had no work, I had no friends. I was pregnant with our second child and not feeling well with that, and the world was just awful.

We would travel a lot and I found Spain harsh, difficult, dark, and nasty. And about half way through, I don't know where this came from, I said to myself, "Elinor, either learn to like it or leave." Simple, right? I started looking around with a completely new set of eyes. What was dark and nasty became beautiful and dramatic and exciting. What was limited cuisine...oh, you couldn't get a decent meal there. I mean, it was awful. You couldn't get any American stuff. No frozen peas, no chocolate cake. Suddenly the cuisine became the greatest; giant crab like I've never had in my life. I still dream about it...it's called centolla. Oh, it's heaven. What was desolate and lonely, became beautiful and austere. I started taking photographs. I still have them. And I fell in love with it. But, you know, it wasn't because it did it to me. I just suddenly said, "Wait a minute. There's no symphony here, oh, big deal. There's no ballet here. There's no American food here. But there are all these other things." It sounds Pollyanish and sophomoric, but boy it saved the rest of my life. In the Foreign Service you can cope with some awful places, Ouagadougou, Mogadishu, those are awful places on one level, but they become interesting. They become challenging, they become exciting. I learned Spanish, I was practically a 4 - 4 in Spanish when I left there. I started exploring. It was heaven. Now I was ready for the Foreign Service. I hadn't been ready before. You couldn't send me anyplace after that that I couldn't adjust to. People would say, "Spain, Spain must have been wonderful." Spain was the worst hardship post we ever had.

Q: Also, it was a very difficult time. It was very austere. Spain had not recovered. But at the same time the bones were there.

CONSTABLE: Peter was the vice consul, and learning on the job. I remember he was home one weekend, and got a message that a cable had come in. In those days you decoded cables manually. He went to the office and came home several hours later, "I can't decode it, I can't do it. I don't know what to do. I'm too embarrassed to call my boss."

It wasn't a typical post for what we still call a dependent spouse, because it was a two-man, as we called them in those days, post. The principal officer's wife was a delightful woman and she and I became fast friends. There were no requirements levied on spouses because there was so little going on. You didn't have to do any entertaining. There were no organized charities. Every once in a while there would be something that would come up, but because she and I were good pals when she'd ask if I would help with a charitable activity, I'd say, sure. Once we sat on a balcony in downtown Vigo, sipping sherry, while volunteers came to us with little boxes of money they had collected. It struck me as a little ridiculous.

So then the question was, where next? There was a post preference report in those days.

Q: It was due on the first of April. It was called the April Fool's report because of the date. Actually, I think attention was paid to it but the fact that it was due on the first, it was called the April Fool's sheet.

CONSTABLE: We consulted with each other. We were trying to figure out where to go, and our first choice was Africa, to some of the posts that were opening.

Q: This would have been...

CONSTABLE: 1961.

Q: So this is high Africa, the Kennedy administration, Africa was the new frontier.

CONSTABLE: Yes. We wanted to be part of that. But a cable came out saying families with very small children need not apply. And we had a one year old, and a three year old. There were exceptions to that, places like Nairobi, but we had no interest in going to Nairobi, or Abidjan. We wanted to go to a hardship post. We talked about it and decided that, all right, if we couldn't do Africa that some place in South America might be interesting, because by then we were both fluent in Spanish. I had lived in Argentina as a child. So Peter put down preference number one, South America. Preference number two, South America. I think the first preference may have been a country, and the second preference was any other country in South America. And then [the third preference, Central America, and we were assigned to Tegucigalpa, Honduras] very early.

This was pre-Nicaragua, pre-Contras, pre- any attention being paid to Central America times. If your aim was to go to a post where there were some interesting policy questions being thrashed out, where you could make a difference, you didn't chose Central America. It was a backwater. Most of the countries, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, were run by dictators, actually Honduras was an exception then, but wasn't a place anyone wanted to go. So I cried for two days, being the good, dutiful Foreign Service wife. "How could you do such a thing?" Peter hadn't told me he had put down Central America. And he said, "Well, you have to put a third choice." Well, I resigned myself to it, and reminded myself that I had hated Vigo, and learned to love it, and by God, I would make the best of Tegucigalpa. It turned out to be our favorite post of our entire Foreign Service career. Certainly mine, even though I was a dependent spouse.

We arrived in 1961, and it's probably the only Foreign Service post where we believed we were American diplomats out to save the world. In retrospect, there were a lot of problems with that vision. But at the time it seemed right. I threw myself into the process of putting down the support system. I enjoyed that part of being a Foreign Service wife, finding a house, waiting for your furniture, sleeping on cots. You remember in those days you carried your own furniture around with you, you didn't have furnished houses. Figuring out what to do about schooling. You didn't have American schools. Figuring out how to cope with the local medical situation. There weren't embassy clinics, and there weren't nurses. You were really on your own, and it was a challenge, and for me fun. I had no desire to work, that was out of the question. But I did want a role for myself that was something other than social and traditional. I had my antennae out to identify how I could do this. I made my calls-I was always good about that.

I called on the DCM's wife who greeted me at the door barefoot with some crocheting in one hand. I liked her right away. I thought I can ask this woman how I get out of the confining official environment, and get to know Honduras. She said, "There's a theater group that has a lot of Hondurans in it that might be fun." "Great, I'll join that." And that was my life in Tegucigalpa. It was an amateur theater group, but it was much more than that. There were some Americans in it, and a lot of Hondurans. In the beginning it was a dilettantish kind of an affair, with little cute plays, mostly in English. I directed plays and became President, Peter acted. By the time we left, two and a half years later, I had turned it into an organization. We actually built a theater right in the middle of Tegucigalpa. The president's wife laid the cornerstone. We were doing six to eight plays a year, most of them in Spanish. A lot of people in the group didn't even speak English. It was amazing, and it was one of the most exciting things I've ever done.

But in the meantime, this being 1961 to 1964, I had to deal with expectations that existed for Foreign Service wives. I never met a male spouse until the '80s, never met a male spouse in the '60s and '70s. I'm sure there must have been somebody out there.

Q: There might have been but I never did either.

CONSTABLE: I don't want to belabor this because I'm sure its been described at length in a number of other oral histories, but basically you were a mirror image of your husband. The ambassador's wife was in charge of the women. The DCM's wife reported to the ambassador's wife, and on down the chain of command, or up or down the chain of command. And there were very clear expectations about what junior officers' wives, which is what I was, would do. My view of all of this was that I really wanted to be involved in the community. I think it's nuts to live somewhere without being deeply engaged. But unless you paid my salary you could tell me what I couldn't do. But you could not tell me what I had to do. Nobody could tell me that, and I drew that line the very first day I arrived in Honduras.

A few weeks into our tour, the political counselor's wife, and the economic counselor's wife, who in those days were high-powered women for a junior officer's wife, came to call on me. I thought that was really nice. One of the two women became a good friend. They said, "Congratulations." "Congratulations for what?" "Well, you've just been elected as chairwoman of the tea committee of the Voluntary Dames of Tegucigalpa." "What!" They repeated it, and laughed, and said, "Don't worry, it just means you have to arrange tea for 60 women once a month." I was speechless. I mean I was genuinely shocked. And I said, "You can't be serious." "Oh, yes, but don't worry about it." And then I got mad. Our phone wasn't hooked up, it always took a couple of months to get a phone when you went to one of these places. I said, "All right. I want the name and phone number of the woman who runs this club, and I want to use your phone." They started getting nervous. And I said, "Are you going to let me call her?" It took a while but the upshot was we went to Ruth Amott's house, I dialed this woman's number...I'll never forget, her name was Iris Ulargui. "Hi, this is Elinor Constable." "Oh, Elinor (I think this may have been in Spanish because I was pretty fluent by then). I said, "I not only will not serve as chairman of your tea committee. I will not join your organization." And actually I used some language I don't want to repeat here, and I hung up on her. I thought these two women were going to have strokes right on the spot. They said, "Elinor, you can't do that." I said, "I just did." "But the ambassador's wife recommended you." "Well, she should have asked me first. And don't you ever give my name to somebody without my permission, ever. Got that?"

I went home, I told Peter what I'd done. And he was conflicted, to say the least. Intellectually, he agreed with me. But another part of it was, Oh my God, what has she done? I stuck to my guns, and I simply scared them to death. The ambassador's wife did not know what to do with me. And I found my own role.

Peter and I traveled over every inch of Honduras. Shirtsleeve diplomacy, with me alongside him speaking the language fluently. I taught English at the university as the second language. I did not believe that a Foreign Service wife should earn money in a foreign country. How's that for an old fashioned attitude. And I was paid rather well.

I told one of my colleagues I was going to take a pay cut. He said, "Elinor, shut up. If you go in and get the salary cut, we'll all have our salaries cut." "Oh, sorry, I didn't think about..." "Okay, so I'll take the salary." I decided to donate it all to charity. The question was which charity? I hope Mrs. Burrows, wherever she is won't be mad at me, she doesn't know this story.

Peter and I talked, "All right, how do we do this? Maybe this is an opportunity...Peter said, "You know, the ambassador's wife's favorite charity is a literacy program run by Catholic priests in rural Honduras, using shortwave radios to teach people how to read and write." A fabulous program. So Peter and I came up with the idea of giving my salary to that program.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

CONSTABLE: Chuck Burrows. His wife was Lucy Burrows. I went to see her and said, "Look, I've got a couple thousand dollars," which in 1963 was a chunk of dough. "I love teaching, and I would do it for free, but I don't want to jeopardize other teachers' salaries, so I plan to give away the money. But it occurs to me that you might like to make the donation on behalf of the American Womens' Association. I don't want anybody to know it comes from me." I thought she would slide off her chair, of course, she agreed. The next thing I know Mrs. Burrows has sent a photographer to take a picture of me teaching. To put this in context, teaching was not an acceptable activity. It didn't count. Charitable work counted, giving parties counted.

Q: We're talking about within the American consulate, diplomatic consulate.

CONSTABLE: Right. From then on I didn't have a problem with Mrs. Burrows and I was free to do whatever I wanted. I ran the theater, I ran a lending library, and I taught at the university. Peter and I had a marvelous time. When we left Honduras there were editorials in the paper lamenting our departure.

Q: Can you give me a feel, I like to capture these things. Your impression of Honduran society from your perspective, and how the place was run?

CONSTABLE: It was run by a very small elite. El Salvador was famous as the country run by nine families. The only difference between El Salvador and Honduras was that there were a few more families in Honduras, but it was basically the same structure. Honduras was technically a democracy but the elites ran the country with an elected president, a former pediatrician, Villeda Morales. He couldn't succeed himself, and in the fall of 1963 his party nominated a fellow named Rodas Alvarado to replace him. Rodas was somewhat anti-American and too liberal for our taste. The Defense Department and the CIA were especially uncomfortable about Rodas.

Peter's view, and the embassy's, was that the important thing was to have a free and fair election. It would have been the first time in the history of Honduras that a democratically elected president had been succeeded in an election. So this was rather exciting. Now, the details are not entirely clear. The Honduran army received a clear signal that certain elements of the U.S. government would look the other way if the army took over.

In October of 1963 Colonel Oswaldo Lopez staged a coup, and remained in power for a number of years. We were in our living room when we heard a hell of a lot of noise. I recall Lopez had timed this to coincide with a local celebration involving fireworks. We lived on the edge of town, but not too far away, and Peter said, "That's small artillery fire. Oh, my God, I better go see what's going on." What does he do? Does he go to a telephone? Does he hunker down? No. He gets in his car, drives downtown to see what's going on. It was rather bloody, and a little nasty. The political counselor at the time was not really engaged, and didn't speak the language. The DCM, a man named Clinton Knox depended very heavily on Peter. At the time of the coup Clint tried to get hold of the political counselor, but he was at home listening to the Well Tempered Clavichord following the score. I think this is a lovely image-gunfire, all hell breaking loose, and Bach. Clint Knox's reaction was let him listen. "Get me Peter Constable." So Peter was up to his eyeballs [managing the evacuation of some American] dealing with the crisis.

We had an interesting time in Honduras. We had friends and acquaintances who were not part of the elite. We traveled widely and I found I adored teaching. I had a bunch of very obstreperous students at the University of Honduras where I had agreed to teach English as a second language. The students didn't always take the class very seriously. One day they locked me out of the classroom. When I found the key I gave them an instant quiz, and gave them all an F. When they complained, I said, "Don't lock me out of the classroom again." "We promise, we promise." So I tore up the quiz. They would cheat a lot. They'd put the smart guy in the middle, and then the guys on either side would copy, and that copy went on down to the end of the row. So one day I gave the student in the middle an F, the ones next to him B's, and the ones at the end got A's. That really got them because they couldn't complain. But it curbed the cheating. They were a wild bunch.

Q: When all these things of students in those areas of being just automatically at the far left until they get out and get a job, then they move over to wherever they're going to be. Was that true there?

CONSTABLE: It might have been, but we didn't get too deeply into politics. The Honduran students weren't as organized or as unruly as students you read about. As I say, I was very rough on them.

We lived about three miles out of town on an unpaved road. One day I was in the house and there was a knock on the door, it was six of my students. "Teacher, may we come in? We have brought something to you." It was a picture of John F. Kennedy that one of the students had drawn just after the assassination, quite good actually. Underneath about a dozen of the students had signed it, "for our professor Elinor Constable." I still have it. I was so touched. They thought Kennedy was a hero.

Q: You left there when?

CONSTABLE: We were due out the summer of '63 but didn't actually come back to the States until March of '64. Peter was assigned to personnel, which he had agreed to do for a friend of his provided it was for one year and then he could go on and do other things. I had decided by then that I was going back to work. That was when I realized that yes, I did want to be a professional. We were sorry to leave Honduras...to us it was the Alliance for Progress, it was shirt-sleeve diplomacy, it was a wonderful feeling at the time.

Q: Was the Peace Corps there?

CONSTABLE: No, not yet. By the way, one other quick note on Tegucigalpa. The officer that Peter replaced was Larry Eagleburger who at the time was thin as a rail. I've forgotten where Larry went on to after that.

Q: I know where Larry went. He went to INR and we were both in Cuban affairs, and then we both took Serbian together for a year, and then off to Belgrade where we served together.

Could you give me a little feel about the relationship between our military attachï¿½s, our CIA component, and our State Department component. Obviously you weren't engaged, and these things aren't all done sub rosa. What was the mood there at that time?

CONSTABLE: This may not be entirely accurate, but this is the way I recall it. There were fundamental differences of opinion about what U.S. policy should be towards Honduras, especially in the context of the 1963 election. The agency and the Defense Department viewed Rodas as a communist sympathizer, and believed that the U.S. should not support him. But the official policy, which was agreed to in Washington, was that as long as this was a free and fair election, however uncomfortable we might be about the outcome, we would not interfere. The agency and DOD sabotaged that policy by clearly communicating to the military in Honduras that there were those in the embassy and in Washington who didn't really agree with it. We were absolutely furious.

Q: You had, of course, a very hard charging CIA and of course particularly in Central America, you had the Arbenz overthrow which was orchestrated by our Ambassador Peurifoy and with the CIA and everything else in the late '50s.

CONSTABLE: I do remember at the time discussion of specific communications by specific people at specific times. It was not just a hunch or impression, it was very concrete. The issue really illustrated a broader and more fundamental theme, the purposes and the effectiveness of U.S. policy in the area, the notion that we can influence events, or build a set of institutions that aren't there, or create an economic framework which isn't fully supported by local conditions, or local leadership. Right after the coup we suspended all aid, and recalled our ambassador, but we didn't take the final step to break off relations. But we did everything else, and the ambassador left. We went to see him off at the airport...I hope there is a photograph of this somewhere...and all waved little American flags as he got on the plane. There was something so pathetic about that gesture. I have been in some demonstrations in my life-Vietnam, pro-choice rallies. But each time I have done so with a sense of desperation. I had nothing else I could do. I can't change policy. I can't make a real impression, so by God I'm going to demonstrate. And I think that our waving this little American flag was like that.

Q: This would be?

CONSTABLE: Late 1963.

Q: You said you realized you wanted to start a profession.

CONSTABLE: We can cover the next four years rather quickly because this is an oral history of the Foreign Service. In March of 1964 I started job hunting, and fell into something accidentally which I did until the summer of 1968 when we went to Pakistan. I helped organize the domestic Peace Corps. I had been thrashing around trying to find something with an international focus. Having just been through the job search program in Clarendon I realize that I wasn't job searching very efficiently. I found that nobody was interested in what I had to offer. Being a Foreign Service spouse didn't translate into anything. I was trying to figure out what to do when the very same friend who had told me to take the Foreign Service exam, said she had heard about a program that was looking for volunteers to help organize a domestic Peace Corps. And I said, A, I don't want to volunteer; and B, I don't care about domestic stuff. I want to be international. She said, go talk to them. And I did. I don't think we want to spend a long time on this. I ended up managing a lot of the field operations with the VISTA program from '64 to '68. We had another child. Peter finally went into the Near East Bureau, that I'd always wanted him to go to.During that period Peter thought about getting out of the Foreign Service. I was having so much fun, and he thought maybe he should do something domestic, and he took a year off. How the times have changed. He asked to resign. The building said, don't you dare resign. They almost forced him to take leave without pay. He went to work for the Chamber of Commerce on a program to improve inner cities. It was interesting. So we were doing that, but he decided, no, he preferred the Foreign Service.

We were actually in Urdu language training at the time. I had left a wonderful job to join him in language training. (FSI had wanted to put me in a wives' program. I said, no. Either an officers' program, or no program at all. Peter negotiated with FSI, and I joined an officers' Urdu program. In fact, that's how I language qualified because I never took a Spanish test while I was in Honduras, but in Urdu I'm 2+2+.) So we took Urdu, and he took leave without pay. I then went back to another version of my old job. When he decided he really did like the Foreign Service and came back, we were posted to the consulate general in Lahore where he was the deputy principal officer. I quit my job and was back to being a dependent spouse again.

Q: You were in Lahore from when to when?

CONSTABLE: From the summer of '68 to the summer of '71. This time I didn't like it one bit. I had decided to resume a career, and I was excited about it. To put this into some perspective, the period from 1968 to 1971 was the last stage of what we refer to as the old Foreign Service where wives were considered to be dependents of their husbands in every sense.

Q: And wives were mentioned on the efficiency report.

CONSTABLE: We were mentioned in efficiency reports, and by then not only had I resumed a career but the whole women's movement had blossomed. And women were trying to change things in the Foreign Service, and there we were back in the dark ages again in Lahore. I was not very nice about it. I found it extremely confining. We had a nine month old daughter, we had two sons in grammar school, and it never would have occurred to me not to accompany Peter. And I had fun. But to me life is...this is corny as all get out, but I think it's fundamentally true, it's fun and pleasure, it's relationships and love, and it's work for a purpose. And I had the first two. I had wonderful kids and a great husband, and boy, did I have fun. But I had no purpose and it just drove me nuts. And people kept coming up with wonderful ideas for silly things that I could do that would tie me down, but would not have very much meaning. It was then that I decided that when we came back to DC I was going to leave the Foreign Service in the sense that I was not ever going to go overseas again with Peter.

We were three years in Pakistan. I played polo, I was scandalous. I don't think I was too awful. I'll give you one example because I've always thought it was rather funny. The first principal officer was an amiable fellow by the name of Wes Adams, with a wife, Frances Adams, who was much smarter than he was. Frances worked 20 hours a day, and belonged to every organization that existed in Lahore. So I told Frances, "If you would like me to take some of these organizations off your plate, I'd be happy to do it." She said, "Oh, I'd love to have your help." I said, "I want you to understand the terms of my offer, you leave, I replace you. As long as you're a member, you don't need me." And she could not bring herself to resign from a single organization. So I said, fine, go ahead if that's what you want, I'm out of here. I was a little more polite about it. She spent a lot of time out of Lahore, and when I took over as "principal wife" the first thing I did was to drop everything except the welcoming process. I felt it was terribly important to do everything I could to welcome every new American to Lahore-with time, with parties, tea parties if necessary. But the fiddling around...I wasn't subtle about it. I got into a certain amount of trouble but by then Peter's career was in good shape, and nobody cared. I played polo, and I traveled a lot (alone). I had a horse in the backyard and I used to get on my horse, and ride out of Lahore into the country with my whip and if anybody harassed me I'd chase them.

Wes and Frances left and another fellow came, and his wife, who was much less aggressive and energetic than Frances, asked me one day if I would help entertain some VIPs that were coming to town. Of course, but I asked to bring my own car. Absolutely. So I reported with my car and invited people to ride with me, but nobody got in my car. We then drove around Lahore for 45 minutes. The Lahore Fort, one of the great wonders of the world, was our first stop. One of the visitors in the car in front of me got out and came back and said, "Do you mind if I ask you a question? What the hell are you doing back there?" I said, "good question." I got in my car and I left. I did not behave well in Lahore, I will confess. And by 1971 when we were coming home, I was ready. I loved Lahore itself, the food, the architecture, the travel, the people, Pakistani friends, we entertained all the time. I just adored that part of it. But I missed my work.

Q: Let me ask the same question I asked about Honduras. What were you getting from the people you were meeting who were Pakistanis, attitude towards the United States during that time?

CONSTABLE: Almost too friendly. Oh, we were just wonderful. They just loved us. The economist in me suspects that was not a valid statistical sample. These were people who had been run through a special selection process. We had an A list and a B list. The A list was people we liked, and the B list was people we had to do business with, and they did not mingle. Absolutely did not mingle. Peter wanted to throttle me, but I did the entertaining, I did the food, I did it all. So the only people who came to an A list party were people we liked personally. Sometimes we did some business with them but they were there because we liked them. The B list was the boring people, and we were just as nice to them, and they got terrific food, and I pulled out all the stops. But it was work, and A was pleasure. We made real friends and they are friends to this day. We left in 1971. I got a call the other day from one of our friends just to catch up. When we went back the second time, our friends were in Lahore. I go through all of this because I think to extrapolate an attitude on the part of Pakistanis generally would be a mistake. But the business leaders, the artists, and people like that were as friendly as anybody I've ever seen anywhere. On the other hand, when I went into the bazaars there was hostility.

Q: In '71 what happened?

CONSTABLE: India and Pakistan went to war. We knew what was coming, and I know Peter was very anxious to get packed up. He would come home and say...got to get packers, got to get our effects down to Karachi and on a ship. We left before the war actually did break out. There was a marvelous incident shortly before we left. I was sitting in the library reading and an explosion ripped through the house...shattered every window in the room that I was in. I was covered with glass. I paused, made sure that I was okay, brushed the glass off myself, walked into the main part of the house where all the windows had also been shattered, the front door had been blown off. I checked to make sure our daughter and the servants were all right. Then I called the office and I said, "Peter, I don't want to alarm you, but there's been a very bizarre explosion in the house. Everybody is fine, but all the windows have been blown out, and I'd appreciate it if you could send GSO out to cover up our windows before the next dust storm hits." Silence. And I said, "Are you there? We're all okay, dear." And he said, "We just had an explosion that ripped through the consulate, and we thought there was a bomb." Well, a little more sleuthing and we discovered that windows had been shattered all through this part of Lahore. The munitions depot had exploded. All of the munitions had blown up. You can imagine what that did to the immediate neighborhood. And everybody in the area was going through exactly what we were going through. Did the gas main go, did our gas here go, what happened? Pakistanis wouldn't admit that anything had happened. And, of course, a lot of it sounded like small artillery.

So people said, the Indians are invading. And I said, don't be ridiculous, there's no air cover. What do I know? I've never been in the military but it strikes me if they're going to invade there ought to be a little air cover. When the explosion hit, there was a Pakistani peddling his bicycle in front of our house, he's thrown up into the air, he lands on the dirt road unhurt, leaps to his feet and says, oh, it's war, it's war, we'll be in New Delhi tomorrow. That was the attitude. Well, finally it came out that the munitions dump had exploded and they never did determine whether it was sabotage or an accident. But boy, were we ready to get out of there. The feeling towards East Pakistan...it was still East and West Pakistan in 1971, was running very high. Our friends would say things like, tell me Elinor, have you ever met a Bengali who wasn't just disgusting? And, of course, Elinor being Elinor, would say, yes, I've met a lot. I think they're fascinating. We returned to DC and I went back to work. This time it took 24 hours to find a job. I picked up on what I had been doing in the '60s and went to work for an outfit called Trans-century Corporation, running some projects for the Peace Corps and for VISTA. Then I was recruited for the McGovern campaign by a friend of mine on the Democratic National Committee.

Q: This is George McGovern running for president in 1972.

CONSTABLE: Yes. Just before that had happened, Peter came home...remember when telegrams were pink? With a pink copy of a message describing the new policy about women in the Foreign Service, inviting women who had been forced out to reapply. Now, I had been indirectly forced out, but there was no way I wanted to reapply. I wanted to stay with what I was doing. I mean, I really was dragged back into the Foreign Service kicking and screaming. I think Peter's idea in retrospect was that if I rejoined the Foreign Service, this would keep us together. There was no talk of divorce or separation, or anything like that. But he was smart, he saw the potential for our lives to go in very different directions, and talked me into coming back. And, as I say, I didn't want to, but I did.

Q: What was the procedure? Did they just sort of dub you back?

CONSTABLE: There was no examination process. You filled out a bunch of papers. You expressed your interest. I can't tell you now exactly how they were processed. I again recorded the fact that I would not do personnel work. I was able to do the McGovern campaign as a senior advance person working in the east coast, and then when the campaign was over waited a little while while my papers were finally processed and came back in in May of 1973. You were asked to specify a cone, and I specified the admin cone because in my other jobs I had done program management, and budgeting. And that's where there was a great need. While it was definitely not my first choice, I thought I could make a contribution and fill a need at the same time, which is always satisfying. Forget it. Closed shop, absolute closed shop. I couldn't even get a job as a special assistant to the director of FSI. I think partly it was because the admin cone was an old boys' operation, partly because I was still a Foreign Service wife. Not being a patient person, I gave this process about two or three months. And then I said, all right, I'll tell you what. I really want to do economic work, so I'll do economic work. "Well, you need the six months course. Fine, I'll take the course". Now, I'm not making this up. "You can't take the course unless you're in the economic cone." Okay, put me in the economic cone. "Well, we can't unless you take the course." This is a true story. So I got the list of the committee that selected people for training. I remember John Sprott was on it. There were about five or six people. Now this is exactly what my father would have done. I went and called on all of them. People knew who I was because they knew Peter. "Hi, I really want to take the econ course. I hope you'll let me take the econ course." I can't vouch for this; but my guess is they put me in the course because they thought I would be trouble.

Q: As a good bureaucrat, particularly if you're not on very strong ground of refusing somebody anyway.

CONSTABLE: To make a long story short I got into the course which started in January of 1974. In the meantime I had been working in something called the files project run by Cleo Noel's widow, Cleo Noel was killed in Khartoum in 1972, and his wife Lucille was a magnificent woman who had also been in the Foreign Service. There were about eight or nine of us assigned to it, I was assigned to it temporarily. It was an awful project, going through old personnel folders, putting everything in chronological order, cleaning out the old files, and removing the inadmissible material. I was especially curious about women officers and wives, some of whom I knew. It became kind of a running joke. We would be going through the files, and I would start to giggle. Everybody would look up, and they'd say, oh, Elinor has found another one. I read these things out loud to them. Things like: Mr. X's wife does not know how to behave in social situations, but then she's French.

My favorite has to do with a young man who at the time that I was doing the files project in 1973, was still in the Foreign Service. The particular report was from the '60s, so obviously he had survived. He was in Africa at a two-man post, I forget which one, and the principal officer left. He was in charge for five or six months and a new principal officer arrived, and they just didn't get along. It was a mystery until the inspector came along. And you remember in those days the inspectors did a confidential report that you didn't get to read. The confidential report explained why the principal officer has no confidence in his deputy. When the principal officer arrived, his deputy took him to his house, they went in, went upstairs to the bedroom, put their suitcases on the floor, whereupon the suitcases fell right through the floor to the living room because the entire floor had been eaten away by termites. And shortly after that, the deputy principal officer's wife traveled to Timbuktu with a native guide-this is the way it was described in the report-and took off her blouse, and had the guide take her photograph so she could caption it, "I dreamt I wore my Maidenform bra in Timbuktu." Of course, we had to remove all this material. But there were hundreds, just hundreds of choice bits. Women officers who were described as, "A little broad in the beam but doing good work." Unbelievable.

In the meantime somebody in personnel had the idea to send me over to the Commerce Department to show whether I was "serious" about economics. My attitude was, whoa, three months at Commerce instead of two years, that's a deal I'll take. In those days you didn't want to go to Commerce. It's changed some since then. So we negotiated and I took a job in Commerce working for a special energy task force. It was quite interesting actually. Three days before I was supposed to report, I got a call from the fellow who was going to be supervising me saying, we've just got a call from the State Department canceling your detail. What? I called my then counselor-I don't want to say who this was, it was a woman-and I said, "did you cancel my detail to the Commerce Department?" She said, "yes." And I said, "look, I'm not going to say anymore now because I'll regret it, but you stay in your office, I'm coming over there." So I went to her office and I said, "take my file, put it in the bottom drawer of your safe, and don't ever get it out again. And how dare you do this without talking to me. If there was a reason for this, or if something happened, fine. But you never talked to me." "Well," she said-and I will name this man-"Ted Curran told me it was all right. Ted figured that now that you're in the econ course, you don't need to go to the Commerce Department." "Oh, really. I guess I'll have to go talk to Ted." "What are you going to say to him?" "Pretty much what I've just said to you." I'd known Ted for years so I went to Ted and I said, what the hell are you doing? Well, gee, Elinor, I thought you liked the files project. Ted, I'm not going to complain, I'm a professional. I'm going to do it, and I'm going to have as much fun with it as I can have with it. Like it? Are you nuts? So I went to the Commerce Department for three months, and it was a lot of fun. And then came back, did the econ course where I refurbished my reputation by graduating first in the class. This is how you get people's attention.

Q: Oh, yes, and it was a relatively new course in those days, and it was considered pretty hot stuff and very difficult because it threw an awful lot at people in a relatively short time. It was an attention gatherer.

CONSTABLE: But, I'm good at math, and I'm good at econometrics. I don't find it as interesting as other stuff, so I haven't stayed with it. Genta Holmes and I were both in the class, and we were both trying to do the same thing. She was trying to get the word out that she was a serious person, and I was trying to get the word out that I was an officer rather than a spouse, and we were neck and neck and I beat her out by something like one tenth of a percentage point, or something. But we had a lot of fun. I thought it was an outstanding course.

And then I came back in the Foreign Service, and the rest is history.

Q: When did you finish the economic course?

CONSTABLE: July 1974.

Q: And then where to?

CONSTABLE: Straight into the economic bureau. Its been so long since we did the first part of this interview I've forgotten whether any of this...

Q: We can repeat it. It makes no difference.

CONSTABLE: Basically, as I'm sure I mentioned the last time, I saw the economic course as a way of polishing up my credentials and presenting myself to the State Department as a qualified and confident professional. It's a little artificial because, and I hope we can come back to this theme at some point. The relationship between academic performance and performance as a diplomat is a funny one. I'm not sure that they go together as consistently as we would like to think. And if you look at the record of the people who graduated from the economic course with distinction, a handful of them did very well, but an awful lot went back into the equivalent of an academic byway in our business. But in any case...

Q: Maybe we might talk just a bit about this at this point, because we might just somehow lose this. Is there too much theory, or you've got something you've got to put out that the academic world what you're learning doesn't relate. What's the problem?

CONSTABLE: I think it's a question really of balance. I also think that it's a limitation that kicks in at higher levels. When I was working in EB I had theoretical economists working for me, some of whom were superb. I thought what they did in their particular area of specialization and knowledge was extremely valuable. But their ability to manage, for example, or to negotiate, or to look at the broader picture, was sometimes not as good as that of their colleagues. I don't know whether I can explain or not. If you're focused too heavily on the theory it can be difficult for you to apply what I've always thought was nifty economic theory which is the pareto optimal theory, the theory of the second best. If you can't get the perfect outcome, then go with the one you can get. But specialists tend to forget this, and people with an overwhelming academic focus tend to forget it. And in diplomacy...and there's one rule you've got to apply, it's the art of the possible. I think the other area...I want to put this carefully because I'm not saying specialists, or people with an academic orientation are bad managers, I'm saying that they don't spend as much time on that area as some of the rest of us. And therefore they haven't had a chance to develop the experience and the skills and the interest in that area as the rest of us. It's really the question of balance.

And this is anecdotal, and it may...I have no statistical support for this. But I remember in the mid-and late '70s when we were trying once again to attract more women into the Foreign Service and see that they were placed in positions of some responsibility. We turned to academic institutions and tried to attract women who had knowledge about a particular part of the world. I remember not long after that I was on a promotion board, which of course shall be nameless, and I was struck by the fact that a lot of these women had a very, very hard time in the diplomatic service. I don't think that the academic and diplomatic worlds are incompatible by definition, but the emphasis and the balance are different. So the fit is not as good as it might be.

Q: Does this carry over into the other field you were exposed to? Political science...

CONSTABLE: It probably does. When I say I'm a political scientist, that's not really correct. You cannot claim to be an economist or a political scientist, or a sociologist, or anything else unless you have an advanced degree. I don't. I have a BA in political science, and I got it in 1955. Even then I had little patience with the political analysis that relies heavily on numbers. I think there's a very important role for that kind of analysis. It just didn't interest me. I liked people and the sweep of history. Why is this happening? What might happen next? And how is the political landscape changing? This is perhaps the explanation of both my strengths and my limitations as an economic official. I don't spend a lot of time on the numbers. But let's go back to 1974.

I had refurbished my credentials by coming in with distinction. I did this by walling off a room in my house...I mean figuratively, not literally obviously, and my family was not allowed in that room. I had three children including a young daughter and when that door was closed nobody could come in. And I studied, and I studied, and I worked very, very hard in this class, and then I would come out and rejoin the family. I was worried about what I would do next, when I got a call from Frances Wilson, the legendary Frances Wilson, the executive director of EB. One sometimes wonders whether it was Frances or the assistant secretary when it came to budget and personnel. Frances Wilson ran it. She decided who would fill what position. The central personnel system didn't touch her. She was responsible for the career development of some of the best economic officers in our business. This is a separate sentence: she was responsible for my career development.

I went to her office wondering how I would handle this interview. She said, I've got two jobs in the bureau. I've got one working on some trade policy issues. Or, I have a job running the computer support process for the trade negotiations. I was good at computers then...the dark ages, but I thought I don't want to be sitting in a room all by myself, I want to work with people. So I said, I think the trade job sounds more interesting, the STA job. I didn't know a thing about it. I learned a lesson which I probably have learned before about process in support of substance, a reinforcing concept.

So Frances said, okay, it's STA. Go down and talk to the division chief. He wasn't sure there was an opening for me there, but it was nice of me to come by. So I called Frances, and I said, I gather there isn't an opening in STA. Elinor, you will be reporting for duty in STA. Well, it turns out that the poor division chief did not understand he had no say in the matter. And that was a little awkward, but he transferred out. The acting division chief, the fellow I replaced, Tim Deal and I, had lunch. They were to brief me about my responsibilities. I think I understood about 30% of their conversation. I was familiar with trade policy, and I was familiar with economics, but I didn't know very much about 301, or countervailing, or split this, or 201 and 516. I mean they were throwing these terms at me. And then I remember at one point Tim Deal said to me, well, sometimes I send a cable, and sometimes I send an airgram. I thought, what's the difference? But I didn't want to ask him and demonstrate my ignorance. And then he said as far as the tags go, I let my secretary worry about that. I'd never heard of a tag.

Q: Of course, you'd been out of the lingo loop, or whatever you want to call it, and these acronyms, and names change. It's just part of the web and woof of our business.

CONSTABLE: And it's a language. It's both a lesson about process, and a lesson about language. So I went home that night, and I told my husband. I don't know whether this is going to work. I said I had lunch with my predecessor, and I couldn't understand anything he said to me. Then I started describing some of these things, whereupon Peter told me what a tag was, told me the difference between...

Q: You'd better explain...

CONSTABLE: I'm not sure I can because I did the same thing Tim Deal did. I let my secretary worry about it.

Q: Anyway, it's a matter of assigning a cable to a certain distribution.

CONSTABLE: It was a series of acronyms that you would put on a cable. It may still be in use in some form or another. But in addition to a title, you would add a series of acronyms which would help in the old days a human being, and today a computer, route the cable traffic to the right destination. And that's really all it is. I suppose it's like having to memorize a lot of zip codes. To a lay person, an airgram and a cable are the same thing. But to a diplomat in those days, they were not. But in any case, my husband who has always had great faith in my abilities, said don't worry about it, which was good advice.

So I moved into the office around July of 1974, and I've always been a quick study, and I've always been willing to work very, very hard if there's an objective in sight. I don't work hard for the sake of working hard, but I had to learn this stuff, and I had to learn it fast. So I set about becoming the Department's expert on anti-dumping and countervailing duty issues which were lodged in that office, and probably still are. This is a fairly arcane part of trade policy. It has a technical component which is not difficult but is complicated and somewhat boring. You have to know what the legislation says. You have to understand the terms under which the policy folks are going to operate in this area. I don't know if we want to get into what it is all about.

Q: I think you better explain because people are going to read this thing in the 22nd century, and anti-dumping and countervailing are terms that may have...

CONSTABLE: Well, let's try to do this simply and succinctly, and it's not easy. But basically our anti-dumping policy and countervailing duty policy are two tools that we use to combat what we regard as unfair trade practices. Dumping is an activity in which another country, let's take Canada with whom we had a lot of trade disputes over dumping, will sell a product in a foreign market for less than what it sells the same product for in a home market. And countervailing duties are duties which we impose on products which are sold in the United States, but which have been subsidized one way or another in their production in the country of origin. Here we had a lot of disagreements with individual European countries, and then the European community, Australia, Japan. Now it sounds fairly simple and straightforward. We simply take a look at the product, and what's the price here, and what's the price there. But it isn't straightforward at all.

One of my favorite cases which I got involved in very quickly in 1974 involved Polish golf carts. We, in the '70s as part of our approach to the then Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, were trying to encourage contacts with the west of one kind or another including economic contacts. We saw this, I think correctly, as a way of opening up the society, and Poland was a case in point where we said, look, we want to try and sell some products in the United States. What could we sell in the United States? I haven't got the details on this, it's probably filed away somewhere, but somebody said there's a terrific market for golf carts in the United States. Wonderful. So a production facility was set up in Poland. This would have been prior to 1974. There are no golf courses in Poland, so there is no domestic price for a golf cart in Poland. So you couldn't make that comparison. But the American golf cart manufacturers, of course, were furious because the Polish golf carts were cheaper and started competing with the American golf carts. So they filed an anti-dumping petition and we had to investigate. The investigation was conducted then by the Treasury Department which had all these issues before they were moved over to the U.S. Trade Representative's office. I was the State Department person on this issue. If you don't have a domestic market, then you have to take the cost of production in the country of origin, and somehow translate those into equivalent costs in the United States, and then charge the difference. Well, how do you compute the cost of production in a managed economy? Completely arbitrary. So we did an analysis, we computed the costs, we came up with a dumping margin which meant that we had to apply a duty to the imports. I'm not making this up. I don't know whether this can be documented or not, but I promise you I'm not making this up. The Polish officials with whom I was working said, "Your figures are wrong." They probably were. We were inventing them, not maliciously, you understand, we didn't have good data. I said, "fair enough as long as it's understood that we don't have to accept your conclusions, but we will look at them and we will evaluate them." Now, I and my Treasury colleagues were delivering this message jointly but as the State Department person I had a responsibility for trying to keep this as smooth as possible. So they ran their calculations, brought them back to us in several volumes, and their analysis supported a higher duty against their own product. When we pointed this out to them, they were somewhat chagrined, and they withdrew it. I always remember that story because ten years later I worked with the Poles again on their financial problems and I don't blame them for being confused, but I guess that predated the days of hiring high paid consultants who would help you with it.

Q: When you get to something like that, looking at the process, did EUR, EE/EUR, the Polish desk in other words, come down heavily on you and say, for God's sake what are you trying to do? We're trying to get this wedge in...I'm just trying to look at ying and yang within the Department.

CONSTABLE: Yes. The simple, and I would say probably unfair way to look at this would be to put the economic agencies on one side, at that time the Treasury Department, later USTR, who are arguing that these practices are unfair to U.S. producers, and therefore we have to implement the provisions of the laws on the books to deal with that in a fair and impartial manner based on the analysis of the numbers. And then at the opposite extreme you have the State Department regional bureaus, and other interests, and of course the ambassador in the country, say Poland, who argue, now look, all right, yes there are some issues here, but there are larger issues, our relationship with Poland which was a wedge in terms of our relationship with the Soviet Union, and history is at stake here, and you start spinning all those out. And then there I am in the middle. I have been fairly successful in my 23 year career at playing that middle role, and the reason I think I was able to do it was because I was able to persuade the regional bureaus, and in those days EUR worked with me just fine, we had no arguments, that I would take as the point of departure what we had to do under the law where there was no flexibility, and then I would work with the trade people, or the Treasury people in the area where we had flexibility, and try and define some reasonable option that accommodated the larger foreign policy objectives. And then I was able to go to the Treasury people, or the USTR...I had more success in all honesty with Treasury than I did with USTR, go to the Treasury people and say, look, the regional bureau has given me their proxy, you only have to deal with me. And if you and I can work out something that is sensible, that's what will happen. I can speak for the State Department, and I understand the economics, and I understand trade policy, and I understand the domestic imperatives here in terms of the interests of U.S. business. And that worked. That's how I handled the trade policy issues. That's how I handled financial issues later. But the regional bureaus rarely tried to second guess me, and the economic agencies with whom I worked...this was all, of course, before I went to Kenya, saw it in their interest to work with me, and only me. So I didn't have a problem. Now, we had arguments. You get into these anecdotes, and there are just so many of them.

Q: They're just what we need.

CONSTABLE: Once we had a case against Argentine footwear. Footwear was then the source of a number of countervailing duty cases in the '70s because it was a perfect developing country industry. And American footwear producers in Massachusetts in particular were struggling with the competition, and were arguing that artificially low wages, and various other elements either de facto or de jure resulted in subsidies, and there were a number of cases filed. One in particular I remember, I hadn't been on this job very long, was against Argentina. Now, the president of Argentina in 1974 was a woman by the name of Isabelle Peron who was Peron's widow, second wife. She had in effect, inherited the presidency, and was not up to the job. In 1974 she had what looked like a nervous breakdown. I can't document this myself but she was having a very difficult time. And these countervailing duty cases ran on a clock. In recent years flexibility has become less and less, but in those days there was some, if not a lot. We would communicate with Argentina, we would get data back, we would go back and forth. And once we had analyzed the data we would present to the government, in this case Argentina, a list of the measures that they would have to take as a government to avoid having countervailing duties levied on them. And I've forgotten what the measures were now...one could go back in the files and dig them out. But one piece of it involved a presidential order which had to be signed by Isabelle Peron. And the deadline for signing this order had come, and she hadn't signed it. My colleague at Treasury called me and said, has she signed it? And I said no. And he said, well, we're going to have to move. And I said, "For God's sake the woman is in her bedroom having hysterics. She has a doctor with her, she can't sign it. Give me a break." And he kind of muttered. He was, of course, under a lot of pressure, and I was shouting at him over the phone. And he said, well, I'll have to have some document, or piece of paper from you, or something or other. I said, fine. So I got it, and it was raining cats and dogs this particular day. I ran out to get a cab, I couldn't find a cab. It was approaching close of business. This guy said he was going to go home and that the order was going to proceed unless I arrived in his office with this document. So I ran, in the pouring rain, from the Department of State to the Department of Treasury with this document hugged to my chest to keep it dry, went into his office just dripping, threw it down on his desk, and he said, okay. The end of the story was that she recovered from her attack, she signed the document, they waived the duties, and that was the end of that particular story. So there was a certain amount of emotion, and frenzy around this.

Q: How did you find the embassy in Buenos Aires, or wherever, what sort of support were you getting? Because I would imagine they played a significant role, getting the information?

CONSTABLE: My memory on that question back in the '70s is a little bit hazy, but I think that we had good support on documentation. I think we had good support on representation.

Q: That is presenting our case.

CONSTABLE: ...presenting our case to the other side. Perhaps not in terms of its merit, but certainly in terms of its requirements. And I think also there was a certain amount of pleading. But that's all right. That's their job. As long as they're doing the representation and the analysis, and the supporting, I don't really remember a particular problem. Again, I did pretty well with the regional bureaus. My Treasury counterpart, who was a wonderful fellow and became a good friend, was much rougher around the edges. He was one of these people who didn't think much of diplomats, he didn't think much of diplomacy. He occasionally traveled to countries where we had problems. And he'd have meetings with people without telling the embassy. But then he would come back to Washington and he'd call me up and he'd say, "Elinor, I think I got into trouble." "Okay, what did you do?" "Well, I went to London and I met with these people, and I never told the embassy." "Oh, I told you not to do that," and then I'd clean up. But the point is he would call me, and he would tell me about this. And then the embassy would fuss, and I'd say, okay, he won't do it again. I have to say I get a little nostalgic about this because there was both a camaraderie and a sense that we were all working on the same mission with compatible objectives. We weren't trying to do each other in, and we got it done. I thought we did a good job. In the trade reorganization in 1980 all of these functions were transferred to USTR on the grounds that the Treasury Department was too soft on the competition. I thought it was terribly unfair. I thought our colleagues at the Treasury Department did a really good job managing these issues. These people are all long gone, but they were fair, they were professional, they were zealous about implementing the law and protecting American companies from unfair competition. But the political atmosphere in '79 and '80 supported a change.

Q: This is always turf and who gets it, whose sitting there, and whose got clout. What about the other factor in foreign relations, particularly in trade things? The senators, congressmen from Massachusetts on the Argentine shoe thing or wherever else. I suppose California makes golf carts, I don't know. Were you protected from congressional political pressure or not during those times?

CONSTABLE: It's not an easy question to answer. I personally was, because I was fairly junior, but it turned out...I'm not sure I can give you an explanation but for the year that I handled these issues, and it was only a year.

Q: This is all of '74 to '75.

CONSTABLE: Yes. The last half of '74, first half of '75, I only did it for a year. But during that time because I had inhaled it all, and just worked to master the brief so quickly, and because it was fairly technical and fairly complicated...those are not the same thing. I knew more about it than anybody in the building. Another anecdote might illustrate this. We filed a countervailing duty complaint against Australia which had shipped some butter to the United States, and the Australian dairy industry...I know you'll be shocked to hear this, is heavily subsidized.

Q: Unlike other subsidies.

CONSTABLE: Many years earlier a complaint had been filed, and a countervailing duty finding had been made and a duty had been put on the record. I've forgotten the technical term. But basically once you get your finding, and establish the fact that the goods are subsidized, then customs is required to collect the duty when the product comes in. And the Australians knew this, so they stopped shipping butter. But this particular year, probably late '74, we had another set of statues working that had to do with limitations (quotas) on the amount of dairy products that could be shipped into the United States from any one source. At the end of the year you sometimes put the word out that there's some unused quota if anybody wants to take advantage of it. Australia had been told that there was some butter quota available to be used, so they diverted a high seas shipment of butter and sent it to a west coast port whereupon, of course, a duty was assessed. Well, the Australians had a fit. I don't blame them. Somebody had obviously messed up. The person who sent the message about the quota was unaware of this ancient countervailing duty fine. But the customs people had no flexibility. They had to collect this duty. So the Australian chargï¿½ came to call on the then principal deputy assistant secretary, Jules Katz, who is legendary.

Q: I have a long interview with Jules.

CONSTABLE: I don't know if you'll remember this. I had not met Jules. We had done no business together. I was fairly new on the job. And I had to do the memo and talking points for Jules' meeting with the Australian, and come up and take notes. So I laid it out. I explained it. I gave Jules talking points which basically said, I regret this terrible mixup, and it shouldn't have happened. But we have to assess the duty, and there's no getting around it. All I can tell you is that it's too bad the right hand didn't know what the left hand was doing, but a duty is a duty, and that's the end of the story. I told him to be firm, and I said it's their own problem that they subsidize their industry and we're not really wrong here. We were messy, but we're not wrong. Jules did what I had suggested, went through it. He was magnificent. The Australians fussed and fumed but they knew each other, and at the end of the meeting they parted on friendly terms. And I got up to go and Jules said, Elinor, wait a minute. I said, yes, sir. I was very junior then. The door closed, and he said, sit down. I thought, oh, my goodness, what have I done? And he looked at me, and he said, is this really true? I said, what do you mean? And he said, I can't believe this. I said, yes, it's all true. And he said, you promise? And I said, I promise. Okay. I never got over that. That man was a prince in my eyes from then on. Of course, it may reflect badly on him that he took the word of a then FSO-5, and used her memo. It must have been a fairly persuasive memo, but he shook his head and said, this is the most ridiculous thing I've seen in years. And I said, I agree, but there it is. It was an accident that happened, this is all we can do. He didn't say, go fix it, go change it, tell Treasury to do this, tell Treasury to do that. He didn't say anything, he looked at it and he listened to me, and he said, all right, I understand. I hope this never happens again.

Q: Should we move on to the next stage. You moved from this. Anti-dumping and countervailing duties to different jobs.

CONSTABLE: I have to tell you one more quick anecdote. And I'm pretty sure now it was the Uruguay Round. I also worked some on subsidies, although we had a broad topic which, of course, is a topic that has been prominent in every trade round that we've conducted, including the last one. A young economist, I forget his name, came in to me with a superb analysis of subsidies and how they impacted something or other, and it was all very sophisticated, and he presented it to me. And he said, this really has to be part of our position. And I looked at him and I said...cheeky young thing that I was, "at this stage just leave the economics out of it." He was absolutely appalled. Of course, I shouldn't have said that. I'm sure he went back to wherever he had come from, and said, those awful people in the State Department. And, of course, what I meant then, and I have said many times since although in slightly less crude way, was there comes a point when you have to start focusing more on the process than on the substance, you have to start analyzing. You've got your economic analysis, now you have to figure out, how much of this can I actually get? And stop looking at the 100%. You don't have to tell everybody you're doing that, but you've got to be able to do it.

In the late spring of '75, Frances Wilson summoned me to her office again. She said, congratulations. I said, on what? I hadn't been promoted, I hadn't gotten any award. I didn't know what she was congratulating me on. She said, you're doing such a good job that you're being offered a deputy office director job in another office in the bureau. Go talk to Dick Smith. I understand that she had told Dick, "your new deputy will be Elinor Constable." I still had this illusion that these things worked by kind of a mutual consensus.

Q: In other places they might, but not with Frances.

CONSTABLE: So I went over to see Dick thinking that he would have to say yes. We had a nice chat. And I said, fine. Dick Smith was the director of the Office of Investment Affairs. His deputy, Clark Ellis, was being transferred. So I moved over there in the summer of '75.

Q: '75 to when about?

CONSTABLE: Until February of 1977. As deputy director of the office I worked on a variety of issues. I had a very able fellow by the name Bill Witting working for me, and that was the first time I had supervised anybody at the State Department or written an ER.

Q: An ER being an efficiency report.

CONSTABLE: I have to go back and pick up this one small story from the trade job. At the end of my first year in the trade office, or first six months, whatever, my immediate supervisor who was the acting division chief had to write an ER on me. And he was absolutely terrified. He wasn't a terribly strong officer, and I won't mention his name here. But he was terrified, and he came in and he said, I don't know how to handle this. I've never written one on a woman before. And I said, here's what you do. Just write one on me, whatever you would write on me that feels comfortable, and then go back and replace all the pronouns, and where it says she put he, and where it says Ms put Mr., and then read it again and just see how it feels. He took it home, he did that, he brought it in the next day and he said, Elinor, I think it passed. And I said, okay. And I read it and it was fine. There wasn't a hint of accidental sexism. And again...

Q: That's a very good technique I would think, particularly in this sensitivity time now.

CONSTABLE: Well, you know, its not an easy thing to do, and the whole business is another whole theme, the business of sexism in the State Department. That's a tough issue. I had my own approach to it which is a little bit peculiar, I guess. I am philosophically a militant feminist, but I happen to like men a lot. I'm not a conflict avoider. Anybody who knows me will tell you, but it's not my first preference. My first preference is to be congenial and conciliatory, honest. I say this to anyone who knows my reputation. It makes life much more fun, and more pleasant. Work is hard enough, without your sitting around glaring over your shoulder, what's this guy doing? You just don't. You laugh about it.

My first day on the job, Dick Smith, Bill Witting and I were going to a meeting and it happened to be all the way across the building and we walked, and as we got to each door Dick would scoot around in front of me and hold the door for me. And about the second or third door I smiled, and I said, you know Dick you don't have to do that, and actually I don't much like it. He said, okay. Dick is a marvelous fellow. And at the next door he let it slam in my face. So the next door I slammed it into his face. By the time we got to the meeting the three of us were laughing so hard we had to pull ourselves together. We would laugh about things, and Dick could come in to me and he'd say, Elinor, I don't know. What about this? Is this a problem? I'd say, oh, yes, probably a terrible problem, and we'd joke about it. That's the way I've always handled it. Don't evade, don't avoid it, don't suppress it. But make it fun, and it can be fun and silly.

And when the women sued the State Department back in the mid-'70s, the class action suit...this is a hard story for me to tell, but let's be truthful for history. I was not going to join the suit. I don't believe in suing the State Department. I didn't like the style of the people who were in charge of the suit. And I've always felt that if you're a woman or a minority, you need to be very sensitive to the fact that you're not always promoted because you're good, and you're not always left off the list because you're a minority or a woman. Sometimes you're just not competent. And sometimes it's affirmative action. And sometimes it isn't. There is a statistical pattern of discrimination which is, I think, clear and well established. And I think by and large it is not just unconscious, but maybe even subconscious. And we need to work on it. But I don't like the suits. And my husband urged me to join it.

His argument was interesting, and I thought about it and agreed with him. His argument was that the benefits that I was enjoying, the fact that I had been invited back to rejoin the Foreign Service in 1973, the fact that the Department was making an effort to provide opportunities for professional women which, to be fair, it had not made (If you were a professional, and you were good, you could move ahead. But as a whole the Department was doing what was comfortable.)was because these women had taken risks. You shouldn't just leave them out there to take all the flak. Okay, so I joined the suit with the idea that if I ever got anything, I'd give it away.

Q: Could you explain what the suit was about?

CONSTABLE: It's a class action suit which was filed by female Foreign Service officers led by Alison Palmer and others. I'm embarrassed to tell you, I haven't read a lot of the documentation. I've obviously read enough of it to give you a general sense of it. The claim in the suit was that the State Department had discriminated against women in hiring, assigning, promoting, giving incentive awards, every step of the way. That the Department as an institution had discriminated against women. And that the women as a class were entitled to remedies, either retroactive promotions...I've forgotten now what all the remedies are to be honest.

Q: That gives the gist.

CONSTABLE: Maybe we can wrap up the women in the Foreign Service thing here, and if there are any juicy anecdotes later I'll come up with them. In any case, the class action suit was finally decided in favor of the women and the Department was required to offer up some remedies. I fortunately, or unfortunately, wasn't eligible for any, and it wasn't an issue. In any case, my own career had zoomed...I mean I was promoted as fast as anybody in the Foreign Service. I became an ambassador, I became an assistant secretary. I was the first woman to be a principal deputy assistant secretary in EB. I was the first woman to run the International Finance and Development portfolio in the economic bureau. Some other firsts which I forget. My career took off like a rocket. So for me to argue that the Department was discriminating against me as an individual was ridiculous.

Now, there were two occasions when I originally came in and was asked to resign, and then when I rejoined the Foreign Service. I had been in the civil service at the GS-13 level which in those days translated to FSO-4. I was brought back as an FSR-5, and I complained about it. Not because I expected a 4, but because I'm not a door mat, and I wrote a memo to the director of personnel and said, I don't think it's appropriate, I should be a 4. He was furious, and was reliably quoted as saying if she didn't want the 5, why the hell did she come back in? He was really quite put out with me. He wrote back and said, no, you have a 5. Well, that's what I expected but at least I had made the point.

But then it was interesting. The first thing I did when I came back was sit on the files project, which I mentioned in an earlier tape. And one of the things I did on the files project, was check the files of anyone who had come in laterally. And guess what? The men came in at 4 if they had been a GS-13, and I came in as a 5. Well, my view of that was it came out in the wash so fast, it was almost irrelevant. Who cared? And I also learned then and later when I was forced to become an equal employment opportunity counselor, that the terms of your initial employment contract are not grievable. I never even considered filing a grievance. I was counseling with someone else who was considering filing a grievance. I never considered it.

I think every organization needs a grievance procedure. I think it is essential, it is appropriate. Having said that, I can't imagine ever filing one. I have encouraged some other people to file one. I counseled a minority candidate some years ago, and when he told me his story he sheepishly said, "I filed a grievance." And I said, "you should, and whether you win it or not, you'll feel better about yourself having laid out your case." But I know so many people who have become obsessed by their grievances, and for whom that's their whole life.

Q: This is my impression. I'm talking about white male officers who didn't get promoted or something and you find that after a while you avoid them because they're always obsessed by this, and it does something to you. And the system often reacts against it with some justification. I mean the person has become less effective.

CONSTABLE: It's a tough one because you need a grievance procedure. Institutions do occasionally, whether it's consciously or not, take decisions about individuals that are arbitrary and unfair, and that's what the procedure is supposed to deal with. I'm very conflicted about it, and I never would have done it.

Q: Could you do me a favor? I'd like to get your impression, because I'm sort of a middle of the road male in the Foreign Service. I've got two daughters, so I've supported affirmative action. But I have almost a visceral reaction with nothing to base it except from what I've heard otherwise against Alison Palmer. What was your impression coming from your perspective of Alison Palmer and Cynthia Thomas-was she in that at that time? Anyway the leadership of this group.

CONSTABLE: Alison, if you're reading this, forgive me. I didn't like them, and I didn't like her, and I hadn't even met her. (Years later, when I finally met Alison and dealt with her on an issue, I thought she was terrific.) I don't want to pick on the State Department because we are better than a lot of other institutions on this issue. We were then, and we are now. I've popped around government and the private sector and I can tell you we're not as far as we ought to be, but we don't have to be ashamed of our record. I hope my militant feminist friends will forgive me. But I think to change an organization like this somebody has to be willing to stand up, and break a lot of crockery. Because it isn't going to happen naturally. It doesn't feel natural. All of us, if we have to fill a position, and we have five applicants, all of the things being equal, will hire the person with whom we are the most comfortable. And that often means the person that's most like us. We don't quite think of it that way. You have a top notch woman, and a top notch man, and you've known the guy, maybe you went to school with him, maybe you served with him once before, he's the one you want. And it's not that you're actively discriminating against the woman because you think she can't do the job. You're just a little more comfortable with this other choice. And if we're left undisturbed, and unprovoked, it's not what each of us does every single time, but it's what collectively as an institution we do most of the time, and then you just perpetuate this pattern. And somebody has to come in and fight it.

Now, if you're a Foreign Service officer, or employed full time, trying to keep unfair duties from being imposed against Argentine footwear you don't have time for this. You also know that if you're aggressive and provocative you're going to make people uncomfortable, and that's true if you're a man or a woman. We women are given a little less scope for behaving that way. So you manage situations, you manage people, you try and be collegial, and it is by definition not very collegial to come in and say, hey, you didn't hire me because you're discriminating against me. Well, you're not going ever to want to hire me after I've done that to you. But I think it was necessary, and I'm glad they did it. As I say, I don't know about the suit, but there was a lot surrounding the suit. There was a lot of agitation, and it wasn't my style. I think there was a tendency to blame everything that went wrong in one's career on the system, and that's not healthy.

I'll never forget once, it was back in the late '70s. I had lunch with a women of my generation, and the promotion list had just come out and I was on it, and she was not. I felt bad about that, but it was appropriate. She was just not competent. And she looked at me, and she said, swearing a little bit, the State Department just won't promote women. Well, I felt a little bit awkward. I'm a women. I'd just gotten promoted. It was just really sad. No sense of perspective, or proportion. And there was a lot of that. But I think the agitation was necessary. I think we're not there yet.

My own experience has been that once I get the job, I have no problem ever again. Getting the job has been a problem. When I came back in in '73, I described trying to get a job in admin, and I think people just weren't comfortable. There weren't a lot of women working in that area then. But when I got into the economic bureau, got my hands on a job, there was no issue. And there literally hasn't been an issue or a problem since in my career. Since I came back in the '70s the State Department has changed dramatically. There are many mid-level women. There are not too many senior women, there are only two career ministers now that I've retired, Mary Ryan and Melissa Wells. I don't know how many Minister-Counselors, and OCs there are. But there's a good healthy crop of mid-level and beginning senior level officers, female, to draw from. And if you're looking, it's just much easier today than it was ten years ago, if you're thinking about diversity, and I think one has to think about diversity, and you're filling a job, and you would like to have a diverse list to work from, that's easier to do now and they're good.

If I may be totally indiscreet, when Warren Christopher, came back to the Department in early '93, and had that meeting...I've forgotten which auditorium, I was out of the country, he was asked about equal employment opportunity and said, "Of course, I'm committed to it, and care about it. It goes without saying"...he should have stopped right there. Because his next sentence was, "You need these people at the table because they bring their special perspective." All I can say is, I thank God I was not in that room. I would have lost it right there. And if you're thinking as a diplomat that you want a woman there with her special perspective...

Q: Using that is almost a phrase which is used that you really need a Japanese-American diplomat in order to understand Japan. Or what have you. One is condescending, it means that these are special people, so if you happen to be Hispanic-American, you can't deal with the British. But it's there, and unfortunately it's being played upon by special interests groups, many of the feminists, are playing this game.

CONSTABLE: You have to, for the record here, look at the Warren Christopher's State Department which has more women career Foreign Service assistant secretaries than any State Department in history. And more political appointee women Under Secretaries than any State Department in history. And probably...I haven't counted this one, more women political assistant secretary appointees than any State Department in history. And the Secretary's immediate staff has included women. So in terms of what counts, which is putting women in key positions, and letting them perform, he gets very high marks. But I was just astonished...

Q: You know, he may have been exposed. One of these things become almost automatic. If you get people mouthing, you might say the sort of feminist propaganda of today, which means nobody can understand this unless they happen to be a woman, or what have you. And so special's perspective because of ethnicity, or sexuality, I think has become almost entered the vocabulary which is unfortunate.

CONSTABLE: That could be. It's hard to know. I have some former colleagues who did work with the Secretary in the Carter administration, who did not feel that he understood the issue very well. It's a tough issue, and my own sense is that the Department has come a long way. That you now have a lot of men who have supervised women, and been supervised by women. And there's enough experience there so that we don't have to just hold up one particular example as the woman Foreign Service officer. Poor Frances Willis who was held up for years, Carol Laise and Ellsworth Bunker were held up for years. There are enough of us now so that we're on the way, we're not quite there yet. By the way, I make a sharp distinction between women and minorities. I think we are nowhere on minorities, nowhere. And we make sort of desperate moves trying to get minority Foreign Service officers into key positions, and then sometimes just let them hang. We haven't figured that one out yet. I think that we need to pay attention, and keep our sense of humor, and just keep working on it. We can't ignore it. I have had three occasions to sit down with minority officers and secretaries and say, you're not performing. And in every case the answer was, you're the only person whose ever told me that. I said, of course. Most white people are scared to death to say that to you. They don't know how. But I'm here to tell you that you're not cutting it. Now what are we going to do about it?

The first case was a secretary who ended up working for the Secretary of State. I counseled her. In her case it had nothing to do with her being black. It had everything to do with the fact that her personal life was in a shambles. I took her aside and I said, look, if you're a woman-this is back in the '70s-if you're a woman and you've got personal problems, you have to hide them because the office doesn't understand. The organization doesn't understand. So let's figure out how you can disguise all of this, and get your professional life, and your personal life, related to each other so that you can function in here. We worked on it. She was a fabulous secretary, she ended up on the Secretary's staff. I was really thrilled about that.

Then there was a case of a staff assistant to the assistant secretary, a political appointee. "We've got to get rid of this guy." "No, no, you better not." I said, I'm going to deal with this, and you just drop out of it. I took the fellow to lunch, and I said, you're not performing. Now we have two choices here. One, you and I can start every day with a what's going to happen today, and how you handle it, and in the course of the day anytime anything goes wrong, you and I will sit down and we'll figure it out, and we'll fix it. Or we can reassign you to a job in the trade area where you can focus on fewer issues, and don't have these crazy deadlines, but it's your call. You decide. So he went home and talked to his wife, he came back in the next morning, and he said, I think I'll do the trade job. And several years later, I ran into him in an elevator and he said, thank you for doing that. You're the only person who ever sat down with me and told me that I wasn't performing. And, you know, he's doing fine. His career went along fine, he had fun, he did jobs he could do.

And finally a guy who couldn't write. "Oh, everybody says my writing is fine." "Well, they lied." He was quite offended and I said, "look, it really is bad. You talk perfectly, but somehow when you start writing you get stiff and self-conscious." This is a classic problem that a lot of people have. So I said, try dictating everything for a while, and then transcribing it, and getting into the habit of writing more the way you talk. He did that and it worked beautifully for him.

But what struck me in every one of those cases was that nobody had ever talked to these folks, and the performance problems were glaring, they weren't subtle. It wasn't a question of taste. You know, you come in late every morning, as the secretary was doing. That's not a preference. You can't come in late. The staff assistant was missing deadlines and losing papers. You can't do that if you're a staff assistant, etc. So I worry about it. It bothers me the way we do it.

Q: Well, the atmosphere I don't think is helpful. It doesn't allow for honesty. It should. I mean people should be able to do it this way but I think there's an inability to trust the system.

CONSTABLE: Alan Keyes marches in to John Whitehead...let's see we better footnote this. Alan Keyes was a Reagan administration official at the State Department. I've forgotten whether he overlapped with the Bush administration. He was an assistant secretary...

Q: ...for International Organizations.

CONSTABLE: He was IO. He'd been a protï¿½gï¿½ of the then ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and had been at the UN and came down to Washington, and then ran for the Senate in Maryland, and recently was one of the Republican candidates for president. Alan resigned in a huff and said the State Department was racist, and that the deputy secretary of State, John Whitehead, a white man, financial official from New York, had treated him badly, and ignored him, and that in meetings, for example, Alan would be talking and John Whitehead would just start looking at somebody else. I saw John not long after that, and I said, God John, I didn't realize you were a sexist and a racist. And he looked at me sharply, and I said, you used to do that to me all the time when I started to bore you, you'd look at somebody else. It never occurred to me it was because you didn't like women. We both laughed.

Q: I've had interviews with people who served under Alan Keyes [noise] awful because he would get up and lecture people. He's fairly young, and he would get up and lecture people who had a decade or more experience in the field than he had, and he really didn't have that much to say.

CONSTABLE: Alan and I got along all right. But I think this brings us back to what is unfortunate and difficult. Collectively, and not you or I individually necessarily, but collectively we have created a situation where as a society we have systematically discriminated against minorities. And therefore, it's hard to sift through the evidence. And if you're a black man in this country the odds are good, I would say they are overwhelming, that you will have had more than one, and perhaps many, individual incidents in which you have been blatantly discriminated against. Perhaps not in hiring. Perhaps just in, are you the gardener? Or are you the delivery man? Or whatever. It just goes on and on. It is natural that at the end of this process a black man would develop an edge, or a little extra sensitivity on this. It seems to me it's obviously unfair.

I used to know Colby King, who is the columnist for The Washington Post. Colby and I worked together back in the late '60s, early '70s. Once we went out to lunch, and Colby-a wonderful fellow-said, well, Elinor, I am not a sexist. And I said, good for you Colby. I'm not a racist. He looked at me, and he laughed, and then we were able to talk. Of course, occasionally he's a sexist. That's how he was raised. Of course, occasionally I'm a racist. I may not realize it, but that's how I was raised. It just goes with the territory. Without dwelling on it too much, and letting it take over everything else in your life, I think you have to think about it and be sensitive to it. It's a tough one. But as I say, the women's issue I can talk about. My experience, what I think of what has happened to me, and I haven't had any problem at all.

Q: Shall we stop at this point do you think? And we'll pick this up again. You've just finished from mid-'74 to mid-'75 in the anti-dumping, countervailing tariff business, and now you've moved on to investment. We haven't talked about investment, or Richard Smith, or anything like that. So we'll start off by asking what was the investment thing. Just for the record to say that we did have a fairly long discussion here about the women in the Foreign Service.

CONSTABLE: We talked a long time about that and we also talked a long time about the occasional incompatibility between a heavy emphasis on academic, analytical, intellectual, and the broader imperatives of being a diplomat. So we don't need to come back to any one of those.

Q: This is the 22nd of October 1996. Elinor, we're off to where?

CONSTABLE: We're off to 1975?

Q: 1975, and you're now in what area?

CONSTABLE: I'm still in the economic bureau, and I've moved from trade to investment. It's been so long since we've talked, I don't remember whether we covered any of the investment.

Q: Why don't we start at the beginning of this.

CONSTABLE: There's one anecdote that I'd like to throw in here because I think it may be relevant to the entire Foreign Service. When I moved from trade to investment, and I'm sure we covered that, I had finally mastered the trade portfolio, and was running around with great energy, and probably maybe a little zeal sometimes working on this stuff. And I was told by Frances Wilson that I had been asked to become the deputy director of the Office of Investment Affairs. Now, of course, from this vantage point that seems like a lowly position. But at the time it looked like a grand promotion, which in fact it was. And I had a wonderful time doing that job. But right after Frances offered it to me I called a colleague of mine, John McCarthy, an economist in EUR. And I said, John, they've offered me a job as deputy director of the Office of Investment Affairs, and I don't know whether I should take it or not because I don't know anything at all about investment. And he looked at me as if I was an absolute lunatic and said, Elinor, don't be ridiculous. You can learn. And without being flip about this, I don't think I understood at that point in my career...I understood it intuitively, but not intellectually... the important role that process plays, and the fact that it's a balance of substance, and the ability to get things done, and the ability to work within a bureaucracy, etc. So I took John's advice and accepted the job. I would have been a fool not to of course, and was launched on a new phase of my career working as the deputy to Dick Smith, who was then the office director. I only did it for about a year and a half.

Q: '75 to '76?

CONSTABLE: It was the summer of '75, and then in February of 1977 I left Washington to take the only tandem assignment I ever got in the Foreign Service. During that year and a half, we were struggling with a number of issues. Probably the most visible and important issue was worries about foreign investment in the United States. They seemed to come at us in cycles. As policy makers we had to deal with concerns, not that we had, but that the public at large had and they were fanned by, if I may say so, people like Pat Buchanan. That the Arabs would control...

Q: This is during the time that petro-dollars were a big thing. It seemed like an awful lot of money was going into the Arab world and everybody was very disturbed about this.

CONSTABLE: Everybody was very concerned about that, and the money was being recycled in a variety of ways. I wasn't directly involved in the discussions about "recycling". I was involved in the piece that was foreign investment. Of course, in 1975 we had a Republican administration. In 1976 Carter was elected. I was around for the Carter transition, before I went off to Pakistan in '77. Our approach at the time was to try and maintain a policy of openness vis-a-vis foreign investment in the United States. And at the same time we were working to negotiate, primarily in the OECD...this did not have a lot of visibility outside of the people who were immediately concerned and some elements in the business community...we were trying to negotiate in the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) rules for the game for foreign investment. The negotiations focused on an OECD code which was completed in the late '70s, and its been around for a long time, and I think it has been a useful vehicle for dealing with things like national treatment. Do you want me to define all these terms?

Q: I think some of this, yes, because the definitions may change over the decades.

CONSTABLE: They may, but basically national treatment is a concept under which we insist that...well, let's use the United States and make it specific. United States investors in another country be treated no less favorably than the investors in that country. It's a concept that's not well understood because in a country where investors are badly treated, under national treatment you can treat us as badly as you treat your own folks. But it theoretically prohibits a country, like Japan for example, from discriminating against foreign investors. I say theoretically because anybody who observes events in Japan knows it hasn't worked that well in practice. So we were active on that front. I did a little negotiating, but most of it was done by the office director. We worked to try and keep an open investment policy alive and well, and I think we were successful in doing that. In fact, I think over the years U.S. investment policy by and large has been pretty sensible under Democratic or Republican administrations. And the concept that as a policy matter, foreign investment is not only not harmful, but in fact contributes to the U.S. economy is fairly accepted.

Q: I remember times when the Rockefeller Center was bought by the Japanese. Now I think they're trying to unload it. But I was told at the time, what the hell, it's no problem. It scared people. Was this part of the thing that was happening?

CONSTABLE: It was part of the thing that was happening at the time. I found certain aspects troublesome because we became very concerned when the Arab investment was visible, and the Kuwaitis bought Kiaweah Island. But nobody knew that some of the largest corporations, the best known names in business, were foreign owned. If you drove up and bought Shell gasoline, you didn't know that it was Dutch. You didn't know that Nestle was Swiss. But suddenly when it was non-European people got a little bit nervous. It wasn't the only thing driving it. We had a little skirmish with the French some time later over investment, but not while I was in this job.

Another issue that we had to deal with at the time was bribery overseas. That was the period of the Lockheed scandal.

Q: You might just mention briefly what the Lockheed scandal was.

CONSTABLE: The charge was that Lockheed Corporation had moved some money around to get contracts, particularly in Japan. That the embassy was allegedly involved...I want to emphasize nothing was ever proven. Nothing was ever established. Bob Ingersoll was the ambassador to Japan at the time. He later became deputy secretary of State, and was called up on the Hill to testify. There were also allegations that ITT had misbehaved in Chile. These situations prompted a number of responses. One of them was a demand for an international code of conduct for business behavior, to be negotiated in New York. Those negotiations had begun before I arrived in the investment office, and again were handled by the office director. But there was this notion that we had to do something about the bad behavior of American companies overseas.

Now, from day one of this whole hoopla, I took the position, and I take exactly the same position now, and this was not a nice or popular position, that the ethical behavior of American companies is extremely relevant in the United States of America but that it is entirely appropriate for American companies to operate within the parameters of local standards abroad. And they are often not nice. The French allow their companies to deduct bribes on their tax returns. We may call them something else, facilitating payments was one of the popular terms. The response to the "Lockheed scandal" was that we had to regulate the behavior of U.S. companies abroad, which in my view put them in a non-competitive position. So in an effort to forestall legislation which is very similar to what eventually passed some years later as the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, we announced an international initiative, and this international initiative was created by Elinor Constable, Dick Smith, and Mark Feldman, deputy legal advisor. We were thrashing around, what can we do? We started muttering and I don't know who first muttered this to be honest with you. It may have been Dick Smith. How about an international agreement? I do remember at the end of the discussion, I said, I think the only thing we've got is an initiative to negotiate a treaty that will ban bribery internationally. This initiative was not launched because we thought we could negotiate a treaty. It was launched to try and buy some time. I have to tell you, it was one of our finer moments.

Bob Ingersoll was scheduled to go up and testify before Proxmire's committee on the issue of bribery and behavior of U.S. companies abroad. The committee wanted his statement 24 hours in advance and we wouldn't give it to them. Of course the reason we wouldn't give it to them was because Ingersoll's testimony was to announce that the U.S. Government was mounting this initiative. There was, simultaneously, a UN meeting somewhere in South America of the Commission on Transnational Corporations which is a small organization attached to the Economic and Social Council of the UN. And our delegation to that meeting announced simultaneously that the United States was calling for an international agreement on bribery. The Europeans were furious. I normally believe in consultations. I'm rather insistent, and we're often sloppy about this, when we're going to announce any sort of international initiative, we not only owe it to our allies to alert them in advance, but the chances of succeeding in any of these efforts is much greater if you have some people on board. And if you don't consult, you're not going to get any cooperation. Well, we knew perfectly well that the French, and the Germans, and even the British for that matter, weren't going to be enthusiastic about this, and were going to do everything they could to sabotage it. So we wanted to take them by surprise, and we did, and they were furious. But they couldn't do a thing about it. They all had to stand up and make speeches about how terrible bribery was, and how they were absolutely committed to supporting our initiative, that it was a marvelous initiative. And Dick Smith and I, and the lawyers from L were in charge of putting together the proposals, and going to New York, and managing this negotiation.

Then along came the election of 1976. In his campaign Jimmy Carter called for unilateral legislation barring American companies from offering bribes overseas, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. So Proxmire said, all right, let's go with this. He had agreed during the earlier hearings that he would hold off until we had had a chance to see what could be negotiated multilaterally. But with Carter's support, and then of course with Carter's election, it was gone. We adopted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. The lawyer, a guy named Frank Willis, and I who had been negotiating the treaty, flew to New York and pulled it off the table. It was an interesting episode, and I have felt ever since that that legislation was the wrong way to go, that it puts American companies at a disadvantage. That a multilateral effort which may never succeed, is the only way to go.

And in the middle of all of this I was yanked to go to Pakistan.

Q: Feldman, Dick Smith and you sat down and you jointly came up with this great idea.

CONSTABLE: I thought it was a great idea...

Q: It's an idea, don't stand there, do something. That's one thing, when you walked out of the office how did you sell this with Ingersoll? I'm just looking at the process, because this became something to which the U.S. Government became committed. How did that happen?

CONSTABLE: Of course, we had to write some papers. I forget who did the drafting, I did some, I had a deputy who did some. As I recall, there was very little opposition to the idea. There were people who said, you'll never get it done. To which we said, "we don't care, it's the only way that we can avoid unilateral legislation" which we all agreed was a bad idea. I don't know anyone at the time who thought the legislation was a good idea. I'm sure there were people out there, I just didn't deal with them. So this was kind of a win-win situation. If you got into an extended negotiation, and deferred the legislation, you avoided unwise unilateral action. You probably inhibited bribery a little bit even though our friends and allies can be pretty cynical. It's just a little harder to stand up and make a speech in the UN against bribery while you are encouraging your companies to do it. And there was always the theoretical possibility that we could negotiate something. I thought that was more theoretical than real. There wasn't anyone who thought it would be a bad idea to have a treaty if it could be negotiated. So there was no opposition. Dick Smith, and the then deputy assistant secretary, Ernie Preeg and Mark Feldman took the idea to the seventh floor where, as I say, it got very little flak. Commerce thought it was a fine idea. Treasury thought it was fine. I think the White House liked the idea.

Q: So you left in early '77 before the Carter administration really got its teeth into the job.

CONSTABLE: Peter was assigned as Deputy Chief of Mission in Islamabad in the summer of 1976. When I came back in the Foreign Service in 1973 I had told him that I would not go overseas with him again unless I was also working. People at the time said, "Oh, Elinor you won't do that. You'll go with him." I have to tell you it was hard. It was really hard. I know you're not supposed to admit to any weakness but I was also scared to death. I had never separated from my family. I did not really want to do it. But I felt that if I took leave without pay two years after I'd come back in, my career would never get off the ground. Peter's idea was leave my job, come to Pakistan, and wait and find something there. And my attitude was then I'll never find anything, it won't happen. So I gritted my teeth, found an apartment, we rented the house, we went off to Wyoming for our annual vacation. I don't want to sound totally heartless, I adore my children as anybody who knows me knows, but this was the summer of '76, and I didn't know when I would get out there, so it made more sense for the children to go with Peter, and start school on schedule in Islamabad, and for me to join them shortly thereafter. The two boys were in high school, and our daughter was in grade school, so I didn't want to separate the family for a long time. At the end of our vacation we flew down to Denver, he and the three children got on a plane and flew west, and I got on a different plane and flew east. It really hurt. I remember Peter said, now Elinor, don't cry. And I said, I'm not going to cry. We all said goodbye, and I hugged my daughter, I thought that would undo me. I was fine. And then my middle son who was not normally that demonstrative, came over and gave me a hug, and that did it. I just started weeping, and I got on the other plane, came back to Washington, went back to work.

I had arranged for a detail to A.I.D. It was a lateral move. I didn't think it would necessarily be good for my career. I thought it would put me in a kind of holding pattern, but at least keep me on the rolls. But it took until February of 1977. The lawyers didn't quite know what to do with it, and they were still flirting with the notion that the spouse, usually female, of either the ambassador or the DCM, could not work in any capacity anywhere in the mission because of the theoretical possibility that at some point the DCM might be your boss. I thought that was pretty ridiculous.

The second thing that slowed it down was that A.I.D. really had no interest in doing it. On one level I don't blame them. Hiring the DCM's wife to work in the mission, that's got to be trouble. But one A.I.D. fellow in Washington, a guy by the name of Mike Adler, liked the idea, and pushed it at this end. And then I think probably the mission director in Pakistan decided, well, gee, I better go along with this. So I was duly transferred to the A.I.D. mission in Pakistan. I was there for a year and a half. I had a wonderful time. Actually, I've never had a job that I didn't like, with the exception of my first job in government.

I was assigned to what they then called the Capital Development Office. A.I.D. has changed its organization and its names over and over again. Basically, the Capital Development Office had two missions. One was to, as the name implies, develop infrastructure projects. Projects with an engineering component. The other mission was to monitor projects. My job was to monitor all of the health projects.

The second thing I did was to develop a rural potable water project in Pakistan that was for some years used as a model around the world. I don't know how much of that story we want to get into.

Q: Let's get into it.

CONSTABLE: The original idea was, that the project would be assigned to me, but the experts would come out from Washington to help me with all the technical stuff. We were going into our first nuclear crisis with Pakistan.

Q: Could you explain what the nuclear crisis was?

CONSTABLE: In 1977 we had suspicions, and I'm not sure even today I can get into too much detail on this, that Pakistanis were building a nuclear facility with some help from the French. We know that that was going on. We knew then that that was going on. But Pakistan was important to us, and we had to struggle with...and this wasn't in my portfolio, but it was in the ambassador's, and in my husband's, we had to struggle with the balance. How do we maintain a relationship, what elements do we need? A.I.D. was an extremely important element in our bilateral relationship at the time.

On the other hand, how do we deal with the very real nuclear nonproliferation concerns that were being raised by this activity. And in 1978, or early '79, again I would have to check the records, we suspended aid to Pakistan because of the facility. Of course I knew that might be happening, which is one reason that I came back in November of '78 when I was offered a job, but I'll come back to that. But in the run up to the aid suspension, as people were thrashing around, and getting worried about Pakistan, there were riders placed on appropriation bills that barred us from bringing experts out on TDY. So I had to develop this project on my own. It was fascinating.

I criss-crossed Pakistan, every province, Baluchutan, Kohat, the Afghan border, the deserts, all over the Punjab, all over the Sindh, wearing pants and a floppy shirt to be discreet, and developed this project by talking to every Pakistani engineer who was working on a water project, whether it involved a single hand pump, or a huge municipal water system. I saw a village where the only water source was the steam locomotive that came through once a day. When it stopped the village women would run out with pots and collect the water that had accumulated from the steam. We all know, those of us who live and worked abroad, that there are places like that. I remember in Bannu guinea worm was a terrible problem, they had gotten all their water from rain cisterns, and standing water is a wonderful vehicle for the development of guinea worm. They had developed a project with help from Sweden. I thought it was brilliant. They used tube wells to pump water to four raised wells for the villagers, and one lower well for the camels. But they were open wells and A.I.D. wouldn't put money into open wells because they weren't sufficiently protected from the elements. I was walking around with a Pakistani engineer who was just passionate about this. I should digress just for a moment to explain that guinea worm is a parasite that enters the body, grows inside the body, and when it has reached maturity exits by boring holes through your legs, and the holes turn into ulcerated sores and you are crippled, particularly if you're living in a primitive part of the world that doesn't have good medical care. It's really nasty.Coming back to the engineer in Bannu, I asked him, "You've committed your life to changing the source of water around here. How did you get interested in this?" He looked at me, and he pulled up the legs of his baggy pants, and he had guinea worm scars all over his legs. Those are moments that you just never forget.

In any case, we used this information and we put a project together. I had help from the A.I.D. staff. There were two elements to potable water projects in those days that were integral to the project. One was the provision of potable water. That means water that passes international standards for potability that are established by the World Health Organization. We could not meet those standards. We could not provide potable water. Do we do the project or not? A.I.D. didn't want to admit that it wasn't providing potable water. And my colleagues and I, as I say, tramped all over Pakistan taking water samples, and testing them, and the only potable water you could find in Pakistan would come from urban water systems during the first few months, and they got contaminated almost immediately. So I asked the question of the experts back in Washington, the threshold question, if it was cleaner but not potable did that help? Nobody had the answer. So the first breakthrough was to admit that the water that was going to be provided by this project was probably not potable. But there were other benefits. It was more accessible, it was closer to the house, there were other benefits.

The second component of water projects in those days was maintenance. The villages were required to maintain the facilities after we put them in. That's perfectly reasonable. They never did it. What do you do? Do you try to negotiate some sort of an ironclad maintenance arrangement that you know will work? Or do you acknowledge the fact that right now we do not have the means for doing that. We did the latter and that was hard for people. I remember the mission director said, Elinor, you go back to Washington to sell this, and you're going to tell them that we're going to install all these water projects, but the water isn't going to be potable, and the projects aren't going to be maintained. And I said, yes, that's what I'm going to. You can't do that. I'm going to, it's the only honest way. You can't maintain them, you can't make the water potable. And we sold the project. It was approved, it was ready to go, it was going to be funded, and we cut off aid.

Q: Because of the nuclear...

CONSTABLE: But for several years after that I would get phone calls in Washington, from Canadians for example, who tracked me down, who heard that I had done some interesting work on water in Pakistan and wanted to know about it. I don't think I've ever done anything quite so interesting in my life.

But working on the inside for the first time convinced me that A.I.D. was a fundamentally sick organization, and I'm astonished that it has survived this long. The inability to deal with the Hill in 1977...

Q: We're talking about Congress.

CONSTABLE: We're talking about Congress. A.I.D. has been bullied by the Hill. I don't know when that started, but it was very strong in 1977 and 1978. I sometimes think that half of our effort was devoted to satisfying the "Hill" on things that weren't really germane to the project. There were legislative annexes to A.I.D. projects in those days, and I think they are still with us. You had to go through and check off over a hundred items. The red tape inhibited your ability to really get out there and do, I think, a reasonable job of helping people. And A.I.D. never knew how to deal with it. A.I.D., as an organization, never challenged this. If the Hill came up with another cute gimmick, the response was, yes sir.

In terms of tandem couples, and women in the Foreign Service, I was in a unique position. I have no idea whether I was the first DCM's spouse to work as a tandem. I was certainly one of the very early ones, and people were nervous about how it would work. I therefore bent over backwards to try and be sensitive to some of the details. For example, somebody asked me once, doesn't the Department pay money for you to go visit your husband? (This was while I was still in Washington but I knew I was going to be out there working with him.) And I said, I have no idea. Well, why don't you find out? I said, I wouldn't do it even if I could. I don't think I should be paid to go visit him. I'm in a very enviable position, we are both Foreign Service officers, we're both working at good jobs, and there are a lot of couples out there that are just not going to be real happy if we get coddled. And I don't think we should be coddled, (a position that got me into some trouble).

When I got out there I think I probably did more traditional Foreign Service wife activities than I did at any post in my career. Peter and I were asked, for example, to join a discussion group on teenagers. We really didn't want to do it. We didn't like the woman who ran it, we don't like touchy feely, and it was very touchy feely, but we said, we've got to do it, and I've got to do it because I don't want any controversy...you can't avoid it all, but I want to do everything I can to limit the controversy.

When the ambassador's wife arrived, I was at the airport to meet her. I asked when I could call on her. Now I wasn't going to put on white gloves and take a calling card, but I was going to go and call on her in the traditional way. Art Hummel, who was then the ambassador, turned to me, (I love Art Hummel), "You don't want to do that," he said. "Why don't you and Peter just come over for a drink? We'll do it that way." I said, that sounds good. So we did and that was pleasant enough. A few evenings later we were back at the residence for some reason, and Betty Lou asked me about the Country Team Wives Group. And I remember thinking, good heavens, how do I tell her there's no such thing anymore, when Art jumped in and said, Betty Lou there's no such thing. Okay, thanks again Art...I didn't say that, I thought that. And I turned to Betty Lou and I said, that's right, there isn't any formal organization. And she said, what do I do? I said, if I were you I'd just invite the wives of the key officers, and any female officers if you want, to come to have coffee, or a drink, or tea, or whatever works for you, and see who shows up, and then ask them that question. Just say, all right we have a new system now. Everything is voluntary. I would like to help in this community. How should I do this? And she said, that sounds like a good idea. And she did that and it worked like a charm.

I think Betty Lou Hummel should be the model. I don't know if FSI gets into this, and maybe its not needed anymore, but for the ambassador's wife who made the transition...there's others out there too, I think Betty Atherton is another wonderful example, and there are others that I just don't happen to know about, but who made the transition from the old system, which was very carefully laid out...I didn't approve of it, but it was clear, to a new system where you really didn't quite know where the boundaries were, what the rules were. If you expect a woman to do something, you did run the risk of having her snarl at you, and say, I don't have to do that anymore, which I think is very ungracious. I never would have done that. I did it under the old system, but I wouldn't have done it under this system. And basically what Betty Lou did was, she did it the way it always should have been done. Recognized that participation in a foreign community is part of the fun and the purpose of life. You can't live in any community and shut yourself off from it. And secondly, recognize that you participate in your own way, and you volunteer.

Once, before Betty Lou arrived, Peter came home and said, Elinor would you help with the Fourth of July reception? And I said, sure. You understand, the reception was stag, and I was not invited, and this was a very "traditional DCM-wife" activity. He said, it will be easy, you can cater it, but just organize the caterer, and create a menu, etc. I said, I can't cater it. Catered food is horrible and it costs too much money. I personally made the food for the Fourth of July reception in 1977 in Islamabad. I did have a cook and I had help from him. He wasn't very good, so I ended up personally making a lot of the hors d'oeuvres. I would never have done that if I had been under the traditional system. And if somebody had asked me to do that, I would have told them to go take a hike, I think.

In 1978 I was back in DC on TDY, and I knew something was going to happen. I went to see Frances, and I said, put me on your list again because I'll be coming out of Pakistan. And she said, when will you be willing to come back to work? And I said, how about Monday. And she laughed, and she said, okay. Well, I think it was a month later I got a cable from her. Would I come back, and be the director of the Office of Investment Affairs. And Peter didn't want me to do it...for people who know Peter, they'll understand, for people who don't, they'll find it hard to believe, but the way we worked these things out, we never vetoed each other. We talked to each other. We listened to each other's desires, and concerns, and then our view was what Peter wants to do, was what he should do, what Elinor wants to do is what she should do, and we've always supported that. I know it sounds odd, but it's true.

Q: Oh, it worked. I mean it's the way it should be.

CONSTABLE: Are we rolling here?

Q: Oh, we're rolling. While you were in Pakistan, were there any political or economic developments that impacted on your work?

CONSTABLE: Aside from the nuclear complications, no. We had fairly good, not perfect, but fairly good relations with Pakistan at the time. The economic situation was manageable, as I recall. Things looked as if they were on a slow upward curve. Now, people may or may not remember that in November of 1969, our embassy was burned to the ground, and that came, I think, as a terrible shock to the people who had assumed that our relationship was so close, and so friendly that something like that could never happen. That was the same time frame roughly of the hostage crisis in Iran when the embassy was raided and the staff were taken hostage. So that part of our assessment of the relationship was wrong. The economic situation in Pakistan has been up and down. At the moment it's not too good. Its been essentially an economic mismanagement story, but they have some very brilliant economists in Pakistan. But it hasn't worked out too well.

The other thing I might mention is that in the entire time that I was there, which was roughly 18 months, as I was criss-crossing the country working on the Pakistani side almost entirely with men I never had a single problem with one exception. We were going to drive up into a pretty remote area, part of the northwest frontier province, which wasn't secure, and you had to have an armed guard. There were three of us, two men and myself, a Pakistani man and an American man. I was always careful when I was traveling with one of the Pakistani employees to take another American along with me because it would have put the Pakistani in a terrible position to be traveling alone with an American woman. We had two men, and myself, and a driver. I, of course, as the head of the delegation was always seated in the front. We were in a Jeep. And it was rather large, and we had an armed Pathan guard with a rifle, and he wouldn't sit next to me in the front of the Jeep, because I was a women. He sat in back with the two men and rested the rifle butt on my shoulder for the entire trip across this mountain. I was not very comfortable with the rifle banging against my shoulder. That was the only incident the entire time I was there. Probably because I was a foreigner I was allowed to do things that a Pakistani woman, even then, would not have been allowed to do. And Pakistan since then has become more conservative. Shari'a law was declared in Pakistan in 1977 when we were there.

Q: Shari'a law being based on the Koran.

CONSTABLE: A very traditional, one might even say fundamentalist, interpretation of the Koran. Not all Muslims believe that the Koran requires that the hands of thieves be amputated, etc. Bhutto instituted Sharia law in 1977 in an effort to stay in power. Once we had dinner with him (Peter and I, and Ambassador Byroade and his wife) and maybe there were one or two people at the table...I've forgotten. But it was a very small intimate family dinner as a farewell to Hank Byroade. And it was dry because Bhutto had declared Shari'a law. But about half way through the meal he held up a glass of water, and he looked at it, and said, "I wish this were filled with scotch." And you know perfectly well that the minute we left, he would nip in his room.

Zia ul-Haq staged his coup in which Bhutto was overthrown early on the morning of July 5th, 1977, right after the famous July 4th party that I had catered. Arnie Raphel (who was later the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, who was killed in an airplane crash with Zia), the political counselor in the embassy, had made arrangements for Zia to tour some facility in a helicopter. Zia was head of the armed forces, and he and Arnie did a lot of work together on political-military issues. And Arnie went up to Zia at the reception and said, how would tomorrow be? Tomorrow being July 5th. And Zia said, I can't do it tomorrow, I'm going to be busy. And Arnie didn't read anything into that. But of course the next day, he understood.

Q: How was the Bhutto regime viewed by the embassy? Sort of in total at that time from what you were getting from A.I.D., from Peter. You know, you were part of the embassy.

CONSTABLE: Difficult, corrupt, a little Byzantine, the only game in town. Bhutto was a nasty piece of work. He was a populist who after gaining power, used power for good and bad purposes, and decided he wanted to hang on to it as long as he could. I don't think we viewed him as anti-American fundamentally, but he began to use the United States as a political weapon of sorts in his campaigning of 1977. There were a couple of amusing, and not so amusing incidents. We had met the Minister of Agriculture, Anwar Aziz Chaudhery when we had been in Pakistan earlier in Lahore, so we picked up the relationship, and Peter used to go hunting with him. He was a very charming fellow, a bit of a rogue. Anwar would bring partridge, goose, and pheasant, or whatever he got, to the house. I knew and assumed he knew that our phone was tapped. Anwar Aziz called one day and I could tell he was about to say something about Bhutto that he wouldn't want on tape. So I interrupted him, and started talking about a play Peter and I were working on. The play had something to do with a man who was having lots of affairs with women, and his wife was cross with him and there were various combinations and permutations to this plot. And a day or two later Anwar Aziz was summoned to Bhutto's presence, and just taken apart for accusing Bhutto of having affairs with women. They had obviously confused the discussion of the plot of the play with the discussion about Bhutto. So from then on Anwar was very careful. But there was an innocuous reference to an elephant in another phone conversation, and you may remember the story. And Bhutto made a speech the next day, a violently anti-American speech in Parliament in which he kept referring to the elephant, something is going to happen to the elephant, and he was distorting...do you remember that story?

Q: There was another one where somebody, I think, Karachi or something like that, well, if I'm going to make this proposal, I need some more ammunition. And all sort of whampo. And, of course, Bhutto spoke absolutely fluent English.

CONSTABLE: It wasn't clear to me anyway, how much of that was manufactured as an excuse to attack us to make himself look good, and how much he really believed. I didn't know where to draw that line.

Q: If the man in order to stay in power, using the United States as a whipping boy, this would mean logically that there's a lot of anti-Americanism floating around in the country which was demonstrated a year later by the burning of the embassy. He obviously was tapping something.

CONSTABLE: I'm not sure about that. Part of it may have been an effort to prove that he was independent of the United States. We were in those days very visible in Pakistan. We were providing military assistance, we were providing economic assistance. In the early '70s an American ambassador, Joe Farland, who was very well intentioned, went to Chittagong and poured grain into the outstretched hands of the director of Chittagong harbor. So there was a certain patronizing approach that bothered people. I don't think it was entirely to respond to, or drum up, anti-American sentiment. I think an equally important, possibly even more important motivation was, to demonstrate that he wasn't anybody's patsy. He wasn't under anybody's thumb. He was completely independent, and he could stick it to us even though we were a big country and pouring money into Pakistan.

I remember the wildly anti-American speech he gave in early '77, sometime between February and July. It shocked and surprised us. Perhaps it shouldn't have, but it did. As Peter and I listened to it at home, our jaws were dropping. Peter's jaw was certainly dropping. I believe it was an evening or a weekend because he was home, and he said, I better go back down to the embassy and report it, make sure everything is under control, make sure it doesn't spark anti-American activity, etc. I looked at him, and I said, I want you to do something I've never asked you to do in my life. I want you to call me when you get there. I was obviously concerned. He was going to drive himself. We didn't have drivers in secure armed vehicles, or anything for deputies in those days. Things calmed down. There were no incidents after the speech. Hank Byroade had left. Both Peter and I felt, and I think others at the embassy, that Bhutto would never have done this if Hank had been there, they had a very good relationship.

Q: Were you there during the trial of Bhutto and his execution?

CONSTABLE: No. I wasn't and I don't remember whether Peter was or not. Do you remember the date of his execution?

Q: No, I don't.

CONSTABLE: No, I don't either, but I know I wasn't in the country, and it's possible that Peter wasn't either. Peter left in the summer of 1979.

Q: But you came back in the fall of...

CONSTABLE: I came back in November of '78.

Q: Back to investments.

CONSTABLE: Back to investments.

Q: You were in investments from '78 until when?

CONSTABLE: '78 until early 1980 when I became a deputy assistant secretary for International Finance and Development. The legally effective date on that was May of 1980, but I think I went into the job a little before that.

Q: Did you find a difference? I mean we were in the middle of the Carter era. Was there a difference in attitudes. Did you see anything different when you came back?

CONSTABLE: Yes and no. First of all I had been part of the Carter transition so the shift on foreign corrupt practices, which we talked about earlier, had already been made. I would say there was a slight shift in our open investment policy. There was an obscure committee chaired by the assistant secretary of Treasury for International Affairs called CIFIUS (Foreign Investment in the United States). It was a committee which looked at proposed foreign investments in the United States, and determined whether objection should be raised to a particular investment. The committee had systematically reviewed a number of investments, but had raised very few objections. There was just a hint that it might get a little more aggressive in the Carter administration. But these were not sea changes, they were not fundamental shifts.

My sense on international economic policy is that the rhetoric changes more than the substance, and most changes are on the margin. A Republican administration will have a slightly different view on foreign investment, on trade, and on industrial policy. But what actually happens in the day to day implementation of the policy is not that dramatically different from one administration to another. Democrats tend to talk a little louder about trade retaliation. But under the Reagan administration I can tell you, we were screaming, and pounding the table pretty hard.

So, no, I didn't notice fundamental changes. And again, I had been a deputy office director working within the career system, supervised by a career officer two or three levels up. When I came back as office director, there were some personnel changes. I was supervised by a political appointee, a very good fellow and ultimately a friend of mine, but he didn't know how to deal with me for sure: Chuck Meissner, the assistant secretary of Commerce who was killed in Ron Brown's plane crash recently. Chuck had come from the Hill, and was a political animal, and we would have meetings in his office, and I would say, what do you think? Shall we do this? And he'd say, yes, I guess that sounds okay. And by the next morning at 9:00 it would be all done, and I'd be back in his office, and he'd say, well, let's see, I've been thinking about that. What? For somebody who talks as much as I do, I do sometimes like to cut through things, and get to the decision.

There was a little more talk about industrial policy. There was a little more talk about foreign investment. But basically the positions had not changed. Now, as the office director, I had to take over a negotiation right smack in the middle. And this is a story I hope I haven't told before. I mentioned earlier negotiations in the United Nations to try and put together a code of conduct for multinational corporations. These negotiations had been going on for a few years, but they were still hot. And companies were still worried.

Developing countries had jumped on this as part of the north-south dialogue; we are going to control these big evil foreign companies that are coming in to rob us, etc. And they had a few soft-headed allies, the Swedes in particular, who thought it would be just marvelous to draw up rules that would be administered by the UN about how large companies should operate. Our position: absolutely no way. Just forget the whole thing. The UN is not going to regulate American companies, thank you very much. This did not change between the Nixon and the Ford and the Carter administrations. Not one jot. The rhetoric might have softened in some quarters.

In any case, I had to take over as head of delegation. And this was a negotiation that had been going long enough so that it had become somewhat arcane in terms of its daily discussions. We had texts. We were negotiating paragraphs, and texts, and words in paragraphs, and they all had legal meanings, and ramifications, and the lawyers were playing. And, with a one hour briefing from my predecessor, I had to go take it over. We had lunch and he said, okay, let me start just telling you about the issues. And I said, I don't want to know anything about the issues. I think it wasn't quite this crisp, but this was the gist of it. I don't want to know anything about the issues.

I want to draw a table. And I got out a piece of paper, and I drew the negotiating table, and I said, who sits around the table? I want to know the smartest guy at the table. I want to know the dumbest guy at the table. Actually there was one woman, but they were mostly men. I want to know the delegation that most often supports the United States, and I want to know the delegation that least often supports the United States. And then I want you to tell me everything you can about the other delegates around the table. I took that chart to the UN and sat down for the first session, and I was scared. I thought, how am I ever going to do this? But you have to come into a situation like that and look supremely confident. You can't come in as the new negotiator, and go uh, er, uh. They'll eat you alive. These guys are pros, they can negotiate anything. A professional negotiator can negotiate anything. And I had a very good lawyer working for me.

I said, okay, here's the deal. I will not formally agree to any changes in the text, additions or deletions, or changes, without your okay for the first couple of sessions. You can write talking points for me anyway you want. But I'm going to talk. I have to talk. Okay. So I sat and listened to the debate, and when the smart fellow said something, my flag went right up. And I said, you know Mr. Chairman, that is an interesting idea. I can't formally say yes right now because I have people I have to consult. But I like that idea, that's interesting. And when the dumb guy said something, the flag went up again, and I said, Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry, but I really don't think we should waste time on that one. And again, when the person who always supported us would say something, I would say, yes, I think we agree on that one. And when the guy who opposed us said his thing, the flag went up and I said, we can't go on that.

At the end of the first morning, somebody came up to me and said, gee, you really know all about this, don't you? And I just smiled. And then, of course, I studied like mad, and crashed, and learned as much as I could about the issues and became progressively better informed so that by the second or third session I didn't have to rely on anybody. But it's a technique that I've used ever since. I think that thing is still going on, I regret to tell you.

Q: It doesn't sound like something we could ever go to. It's like having non-Americans in charge of American troops.

CONSTABLE: No, no, we can't. But the negotiations just dragged on and on. It was the first multilateral negotiation that I ran for the U.S. side, where I was unambiguously in charge. I didn't have anybody looking over my shoulder and I was able to try different techniques. And for two years I did it, and then I turned it over to somebody else.

Q: Tell me, on a negotiation like this, again and again we have people saying...and these negotiations are still going on, is anything done outside of a waste of time? I mean, looking at it objectively, does the very effort of perpetual negotiation, does this generate any light as well as heat?

CONSTABLE: I think so, but it's slow, it's on the margin, it's hard to measure. Sometimes, I think, you measure it by the absence of the negative...that's not even English, come on Elinor, talk English here. If we had not participated in that negotiation it would have been one more opportunity for the world to say, oh, the United States is terrible. The approach should be to devote the appropriate resources to this sort of thing. You want to keep the level of representation down. You can accomplish other things on the margin. As I say, I did it for two years. At the end of the two years I was fairly close to a number of the people around the table. They all trusted me. They knew that I would do what I said I would do. That I knew the issues. That I was fair, tough, but fair was the rep. I cut my teeth as a negotiator on that, and was able to test things that I later used.

The chairman was a Swede named Sten Nicklasson, and he and I fought and fought for about a year, and then eventually came around to like and respect each other. Once he put us in a small room at the UN where no smoking was allowed. In those days everybody smoked, including me. I smoked a lot, a heavy smoker. So I couldn't smoke. I got irritated, and as we spent two or three hours talking about this, that and the other, I said, no, I can't agree with that. Well, come on Elinor, this is perfectly reasonable. No, I don't like it, let's move on to the next one. And I was just totally uncooperative. At the end of the three hours I told Sten...Sten was also a smoker, don't ever do that to me again. It really backfired. He said, we did it deliberately. We figured that you'd get so frustrated and impatient that you'd start agreeing to things so we could finish the session and you could go have a cigarette. I said, no, it doesn't work that way with me. Don't do it again. And he said, okay, I promise. That's the sort of relationship we had developed.

One other anecdote on this negotiation. We had a meeting in Mexico City where I tested a simple hypothesis. If the other fellow wants the result more than you do, you have him under your total control. And it's something we Americans just don't do very well. We go into negotiations with the idea that there's supposed to be a nice outcome, and our focus is on the nice outcome. No. The focus is how you get there. And if you want that nice outcome more than the fellow across the table, you're not going to get there.

This was a meeting of the commission. A working group did the negotiations, and then once or twice a year reported to the Commission on transnational corporations. The Mexicans wanted the Commission to meet in Mexico City. The then Mexican delegate was a fellow by the name of Bernardo Sepulveda, who was the head of the Mexican treasury some years later. Bernardo cut quite a dashing figure, kind of the Jimmy Smits of Mexico City. He wanted to have a "declaration of Mexico City," a document that would come out of this negotiation. He didn't really care what was in it, as long as we had a consensus document that was more than a communiquï¿½. The meeting lasted two weeks, and of course, if you have a two week UN meeting you don't get down to the serious stuff until a week and five days has passed. And a week and five days into this we got down to the real nitty-gritty, and did close to an all-nighter, it must have been 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning when this particular event occurred. We were almost there. We had agreed on almost the entire document, and I had enough flexibility to deal with what was left. But I was waiting for the right moment.

And the then Soviet delegate (this was before the disintegration of the Soviet Union), raised his flag, and he said, I would like to propose some additions to this document. Bernardo, who was chairing, said, what? All the proposals have long since been submitted, and thrashed over, and argued over, and we were down to a few brackets. And the Soviet delegate said, "I don't think"...the poor fellow, he had to speak in English, he didn't know Spanish. I don't know if we had translation in Russian or not. "I don't think there's enough about the problems associated with multinational corporations. I think we need more language in here about all the bad things they do." Everybody around the table groaned. It was late.

I raised my flag. They all looked at me. Okay, she'll take him on. And I said, I agree. What? I thought Bernardo was going to kill me. I said, I agree with my colleague. I can accept the document as it stands now. But you know, he's right we don't have enough in here about the activity of these companies. Now, I have here, and I reached in and I pulled up about a five pound document, I have a lot of information about all the good things they do. And I think what we should do here is draft a new paragraph that has language that my Soviet colleague wants to put in, and that I would like to put in about all the constructive things that these companies do. Of course, if you'd rather not make the addition, I can live with the document the way it is.

For the next two hours the entire room ganged up on this poor Russian fellow. Every once in a while somebody would raise a flag and say, Elinor, couldn't you take some of his language. And I said, sure, I'll take as much as he wants to put in, as long as we put some extra language on our side in. Otherwise I'll accept it the way it is. And they finally beat him into submission. I don't know whatever happened to him in Moscow.

About a year later, maybe less, I was in New York negotiating a completely different set of issues. It was late, we had a document almost ready to go, and the East German delegate...there was then still an East Germany, raised his flag, and asked to make an addition. My flag went up and I said, Mr. Chairman, I think he's absolutely right. We don't have enough in this document on this issue, and I have some stuff, and I was ready to roll again. From the gallery came this hysterical laughter from a Canadian delegate who had been with me in Mexico City, and knew exactly what I was doing. I looked at him as if to say, shut up. He did. Then I did exactly the same thing, and the entire room pulverized this poor fellow. Now, it's not something I could do every week. But these things were just...I sort of made them up as I went along and it was fun. I've always loved that. I had a lawyer with me in Mexico, and at one point he put his head in his hands, and I thought, oh, oh, I've done something wrong here. And when we were through I said, what's the problem? And he said, no, I was just in awe, that was just so brilliant. I've never seen anything like that before. You have to come up with different things, but it was fun. Anyway, enough of that.

Q: Were there any other issues in the investment side that particularly engaged you that might be of interest?

CONSTABLE: I spent a lot of time on the multinational corporation issues in the UN, and went back to the OECD negotiation, and finished the documentation on the OECD code of business behavior which was voluntary, and simply made suggestions with hortatory language, which could be useful or not depending on how it was used, and what the climate was. The business community had a very different perspective from the labor organizations that were vocal at the time. I don't think the organizations that expressed labor views in the OECD were then, I don't know about now, entirely representative of the American labor movement. I was viewed as very pro-business in the Carter administration. I am pro-business, I guess.

The inward investment issues were turning around, but again I don't remember any particularly great controversies. We did a tremendous amount out of that office of just day to day management of issues at a very low level to make sure that they were handled properly. Proposals for Export-Import Bank loans, for example, were handled in the State Department out of my office. One of my staff would sit in on meetings where they were reviewed, and present any foreign policy concerns. This wasn't a big debate, it wasn't flamboyant, there weren't a lot of arguments. It was just a very good and useful process that was managed. The same on the inward investment. I had someone who sat on that committee to make sure that if there were foreign policy concerns they were addressed. By and large we pushed for an open investment policy. I handled the UN stuff myself. OPIC came out of that office, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

The one thing over which there was a fair amount of controversy toward the end of the period, late '79 and early 1980, was the trade reorganization. You remember the Act of 1980 which transferred responsibilities for anti-dumping and countervailing duties from the Treasury Department over to the United States Trade Representative, also transferred responsibility for certain commercial functions from State over to the Commerce Department and gave the Trade Representative clearer authority in terms of trade negotiations, transferring again some State Department responsibility over to the USTR. There was a big political push to do this on the Hill. The argument being that Treasury wasn't aggressive enough in hammering unfair trade practices abroad. That the State Department wasn't aggressive enough in supporting U.S. companies abroad. That the State Department maybe wasn't aggressive enough in conducting trade negotiations, etc. There was nothing on investment. The Hill paid literally no attention to the investment issues in this process.

Bob Hormats had just gone over to USTR as the deputy U.S. Trade Representative. He seized the opportunity presented by the reorganization to try and grab a series of investment responsibilities, including negotiation of bilateral investment treaties (a new gimmick. We were going to try and regularize investment relationships between the U.S. and other countries. I don't think its accomplished very much frankly). The USTR also tried to take over some of the OECD negotiations.

I decided that this was silly, and I worried that the State Department...I was only an office director at the time... was paying no attention to this. So I went to Ernie Johnson who was in charge of the defense of our portfolios, and with Assistant Secretary Julius Katz's permission, said, I'm going to fix it. And he said, don't do anything without... I said, Ernie, I'm just going to go fix it. So Ernie got a little ticked off at me because I did not coordinate with him. I went over to USTR and I negotiated an MOU with Bob Hormats.

Q: MOU is?

CONSTABLE: Memorandum of Understanding, which divided responsibilities between State and USTR, which basically left almost everything to the State Department, and Bob agreed to it. I then went to Ben Read, who was the Under Secretary...I was a little cheeky in those days, I'm still cheeky. I said, look, I have negotiated the MOU on investment. Don't change it, it's done. Don't let Bob Hormats, who's a slippery guy, I know him, I've worked for him, don't let him come to you and redo this. Well, Ben didn't pay any attention to me, of course. Bob came to him, and he redid it. But there was enough ambiguity in the result so that I was able to argue subsequently that nothing had really changed. USTR had to fight tooth and nail for every inch. They did some of the bilateral investment treaties, that I didn't care about. But they didn't take the OECD, they didn't take the UN, they didn't by and large take the investment portfolio away from us. It was war.

After one negotiation I had taken an USTR representative with me on the delegation, and I didn't like the way he behaved, so I excluded him from most of the sensitive stuff. He came back and complained. Bob invited me over to his office to try to "work it out". And I said, are you sure you want this meeting? And he said, yes. And I said, fine. Went over to his office and the fellow who had complained was sitting there. Bob was sitting in between us. So the fellow said, you wouldn't let me come in to the closed session. I said, that's right, I wouldn't. Why not? Because I didn't think you were competent to handle it. Bob I think said, what's the basis for that? I gave him three or four illustrations, and then he said, you wouldn't let me help with the cable. And I said, on the contrary, I had you do a first draft of the cable and it was illiterate. It had to be rewritten totally. I invited you to another negotiating session and you got bored because we spent three hours on one phrase. That's what negotiations are all about in this business. Anyway, the poor fellow never complained again. Bob sat there looking very sheepish, and I said to him, are you going to do this again? And he said, no. And he never did. There was much too much wasted energy over that particular aspect of the reorganization, but we did manage to keep the State Department in the game in a reasonable way on investment.

Not long after that, you may remember this, there was a lot of unhappiness in the ranks about the reorganization, and the way in which Department responsibilities had been given away. It had the appearance of having been done without a lot of thought. Warren Christopher, then Deputy Secretary of State, had a meeting with mid-level officers, and it was one of these awful meetings which I've always loathed, where management calls you in to try and tell you why you really shouldn't be upset. Usually when you're upset there's a good reason. Jules asked me to go, and Frances Wilson said, "but she's a senior officer now"...I think I had just been promoted. And Jules said, I don't care, she's the only one who will tell him what she really thinks. And I did. Christopher was trying to explain that there had been political imperative behind all of this, and there was some back and forth about that. And I then said, "excuse me but there was no political imperative on the investment issue. The Hill had no interest. We were under no pressure to transfer any authority whatsoever on investment, and yet it was done." He said, Elinor, why do you think that happened? And I said, I think it's obvious. It's because the people who negotiated the papers didn't understand what they were doing. It's true. Ben Read didn't understand what this stuff meant, and he wouldn't listen. And I added, and he wouldn't listen to the people who did know, like me.

I must say, the Secretary is a very gracious man, and he said, well, okay, an interesting perspective, I take your point. I don't know what he was thinking, but that's what he said. And that was the end of that story. It reinforced, if it needed reinforcing, my view that it is absolutely essential for the State Department to be at the table on any international economic issue if the foreign policy of the United States is going to be properly managed. And there are a variety of ways of being at the table. You don't have to be in charge, but you have to have a handle, and the handle can't depend on somebody else's willingness to include you. It has to be a legal handle of some sort. We can again come back to that later, but that was the controversy.

Then Bob Hormats, who had come back and replaced Jules Katz as the Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, was caught up in a bit of a political mess. Deane Hinton had been brought in to replace Jules Katz, and it was Deane Hinton who asked me to become a deputy assistant secretary. This was at the very end of the Carter administration. I had been running the Office of Investment Affairs now for a couple of years, and I really loved it. I don't remember when I've had more fun.

Q: Today is the 14th of November, 1996. Elinor, you heard where we are. We're 1979ish.

CONSTABLE: 1979, and I was an office director in EB having the time of my life, learning how to negotiate, thoroughly enjoying every minute of it. And as I indicated last time, I got a call from a fellow who was working in Personnel, and wanted to know if I'd be interested in being the ambassador to ECOSOC, and I said I wouldn't. Now, normally I think about things for a day or two, but in this case Peter and I had been separated during most of his tour in Pakistan. We'd gotten back together the summer of 1979, this was either toward the end of the year or early 1980. And I didn't want to leave my family again. They wouldn't, I knew, relocate to New York. That was impractical. And beyond that the ECOSOC job for people really interested in economic work wasn't one that we all aspired to.

Q: Tell me what ECOSOC was, is.

CONSTABLE: The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. I take the view that by and large the UN has not been successful in dealing with economic issues that have a broad scope. We never, wisely I think, ask the UN to deal with trade. We have separate trade organizations that have their own rules. The UN, directly or indirectly, has over the years dealt usefully with a number of more specialized economic issues. But where the UN has gotten involved as it did in the '70s, and early '80s, in a much broader economic agenda, I think its been inefficient and inept. UNCTAD was part of that system, UNIDO was part of that system. We can spell out those acronyms.

Q: Let the students find out what they mean.

CONSTABLE: ECOSOC is perhaps a little more benign than UNCTAD or UNIDO in that it is a traditional part of the UN system, and it has responsibilities for some fairly important issues. But we didn't look to ECOSOC to be terribly involved in terms of either making policy, or leading the negotiations. When I went to the UN, for example, to run negotiations that were supposedly under ECOSOC, I had almost nothing to do with our mission. This wasn't deliberate, I wasn't boycotting them, they just weren't engaged. They were trying to make the ECOSOC Ambassadorship a woman's job, and I objected to that. As it turned out the individual who took the job when I turned it down, was Joan Spero, who, of course, is now Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Joan was a superb ambassador to ECOSOC, and Joan made it into a job that is worth having, and I never told her what had happened until years later when we became friends. But in any case I was asked if I wanted the job. I said no.

I then got a call from the same fellow in Personnel, who said, what would you say if the Secretary, then Cy Vance, asked you to take this? Because they really wanted women in these jobs. I said, I'd tell him the same thing I told you. I'd tell him no. And he started putting a little heat on me. Well, you can't say that to the Secretary of State. I said, of course I can. So we hung up, he was not happy with me at all. I then immediately called one of my best friends, a fellow named Arnie Raphel, who was the executive secretary. I said, Arnie, will you make sure that that piece of paper involving me and ECOSOC never gets to the Secretary's desk. And he said, sure. So as far as I know the Secretary of State never knew anything about this.

So I went back to my job happily. And in the middle of all this I went to see Frances Wilson. We've talked about Frances Wilson.

Q: By the way, is Frances Wilson still alive?

CONSTABLE: No, she is not. She died sometime when I was in Kenya which would have been between 1986 and 1989. I invited Frances to my swearing in. She's probably the only real mentor I've ever had, and she didn't come and I found out at the time she was quite ill. This was '86, and I think she was gone probably by '87 or '88.

But in any case, I went to see Frances to tell her what had happened, and she said, Elinor, don't worry about it, you'll get a good job offer soon. I said, "I'm not worried about it." I've always been ambitious in a somewhat unconventional way. I've never looked to the next job. I've always carried out my ambitions, such as they are, by taking any assignment and controlling it. Don't mess with me. Don't tell me what to do. Give me complete freedom to do it my way. So I wasn't thinking about the next step. Frances kept saying, don't worry. I'm not worried. I think she was a little frustrated, I didn't bite. I didn't say, Frances, what's the next job? And she said Deane Hinton, who had fairly recently taken over as assistant secretary, legendary Deane Hinton who I'm sure appears in a number of oral histories, is going to offer you a DAS, Deputy Assistant Secretary. I thought, oh, no, because those were the days when every bureau had to have a woman deputy assistant secretary. It didn't work very well. And people will deny this, but I guarantee you this was true. First, every bureau was required to have a woman. Second, the bureaus themselves didn't like this idea. And it wasn't because they didn't think women could be DASs. And it wasn't because they didn't like particular women. They didn't like being told that they had to follow the quota system.

Q: It's a quota system.

CONSTABLE: So what happened was that several women were forced on bureaus in jobs that they weren't quite ready for, and there was a fair amount of bad feeling all around. In EB at the time, the women's slot was the slot that dealt with transportation and communications issues which were given fairly short shift in those days by policy makers. People who knew the issues, and were involved with them, found them very interesting, and found working on them intellectually stimulating, if not career enhancing, as we like to say. But it was viewed as the woman's slot. It was an area that I had no background, or interest in, and I went home that night thinking, oh my goodness, Deane Hinton is going to offer me this job. I'm going to have to say no. My career will be over. You can't turn down an embassy and a DAS in a space of a week, and be taken seriously.

The next day I came in, and I got a call...I have to tell this story because a lot of people know Deane Hinton. He is legendary. I got a call from Deane's secretary asking if I could have lunch with him. And I told her I had a lunch engagement, that I'd break it if he wanted me to, but I'd rather do it another day, or come up later in the day. She said no problem, just come up at 3:00, or whatever. So at 3:00 I appeared in Deane's office. And he said, well, you're too busy to have lunch with the assistant secretary...it's typical Deane Hinton. And I said, no, I had another engagement, I offered to break it, you all told me no, so here I am. Well, all right, sit down. And he offered me a DAS position, but much to my surprise, not the communications and transportation position, but the job that historically has been regarded as the plum in EB, the best job in the bureau, International Finance and Development. I was really stunned, my mouth just fell open. After a couple of seconds I said, well now, Deane, are you offering this to me because I'm a woman? And he said, yes. And I thought, oh no, here we go. Then he said, dammit, you're a competent woman, and if you don't take it they'll make me take an incompetent woman. Oh, okay. Then I said, "Deane, I know part of this portfolio pretty well." It was the portfolio that covered development economics which, of course, I had done in Pakistan. It covered investment which, of course, I had been doing. But it covered international finance in depth and I had no background in that area, and I felt that was the most important component of the job. And I told Deane, "I have no background in finance." And he said, I know. The Under Secretary then, Dick Cooper, and I have talked about this and he understands that, but we both think you can learn.

I said, okay, I'm going to follow my rule which is think about these things for 24 hours, I'll give you an answer tomorrow morning. And I went home convinced that of course I wanted to do it, I would kill for that job. But I wanted to satisfy myself that this was really something more than an affirmative action. Obviously that had something to do with it.

Q: You might explain for the historically minded what affirmative action meant in these terms of 1980.

CONSTABLE: That's just awfully hard to do. There are so many definitions. There's what affirmative action is supposed to mean, paying attention, and focusing on equality of opportunity. If you're in an organization that traditionally is run by white males, and you yourself are a white male, it is just a little harder for you to hire women or minorities in top management positions. So it's reasonable, it seems to me, to ask that you pay special attention to allowing women and minorities to compete. And when you're going to fill an important job, try to consider at least one woman or a minority for the job. But what it does not mean, and should not mean, is that you have to hire a woman or a minority, and that you have to fill a quota. Well, the difficulty arises when white men look at women and minorities and don't hire them. Then somebody comes along and says, well, you're not hiring them because you aren't paying attention, and you have to hire at least one. And that's the easy way out, and it's the wrong way.

And in the Carter administration, as I said earlier, every bureau had to have a woman deputy assistant secretary. And if you were a woman, and I always urge my women friends to be very sensitive about this, you had to be particularly attentive to your own situation. I know I said this in an earlier discussion, not every promotion was on merit, and not every non-promotion was because you were a woman. It was hard. But I decided to do it, and in retrospect, I did that job as well as my predecessor or my successor and no one ever had any complaints and things worked out fine. I brought in people who had more background than I in theoretical economics and in finance. I'm a strong manager. I'm not nice, and sweet, and cuddly and all those things that people like women managers to be, but I'm a very forceful manager, and I'm a very good negotiator, and those were huge components of that job. And I'm no slouch at bureaucratics, and that was a huge piece of that job. So it worked out all right, but I must say I loved that meeting with Deane Hinton.

Q: Well, just one thing. I always like to get in here, you had this job from when to when approximately.

CONSTABLE: From May of 1980 until January of 1983. The official personnel action was in May, but I moved up to that office before that, and I've forgotten exactly when it was.

Q: It's basically just to get the years.

CONSTABLE: That was a very interesting time. The first order of business as far as I was concerned was to get a handle on everything that was going on. Get three good office directors. In those days Frances Wilson hired new office directors for you. But I had something to say about it, and she had a lot of respect for me. We ended up, I think, with an awfully strong operation. And then by the middle of 1980, which of course was an election year, it was very clear to me that Reagan was going to win. In June of that year when the outcome was still in doubt, I heard a political scientist analyze the campaign. I came back to EB and I called my office directors in and I said, the Republicans are going to win, and we need to prepare for that. It's hard to sum up those years but in 1980 for a high level government bureaucrat, the thought of Ronald Reagan as President of the United States was wild.

Q: It really was, yes.

CONSTABLE: Everybody said, Elinor, no. And I said, trust me, it's going to happen, I want us to be well positioned when this happens. Now, to take a step back. The '70s and early '80s were days of the north-south dialogue. There was a point of view that was held by a fair number of people in high places, including I think, Don McHenry when he was ambassador to the UN. I have a very, very high regard for Don McHenry, and consider him a friend. I disagreed with his position, but I don't want this to be taken as criticism of him. His tenure as ambassador to the UN was one of the best. But Don felt that we should be more accommodating to the developing countries' desire to play a larger role in international economic decision making. And this was a view that was held by a lot of respectable people, this was not a wacko idea. I was dead set against it. I think that money plays a role in political relationships, and I think that's just what is, not necessarily what ought to be. As a taxpayer I don't particularly want the people who have borrowed my money to then come and tell me how I have to give more of it away. I thought that a lot of the attitudes that were brought to the table during the north-south dialogue were pretty sappy, and particularly in the UN context where negotiators are playing very rough with you, are very good at what they do.

The negotiators from Malaysia, for example, are legendary. The negotiators from India are legendary, they can run rings around you, and they loved to get you in a large room and hammer the United States because it doesn't provide enough aid to poor countries. If you apologize you're dead. You cannot do that. What you have to say at the table, in my view, is, our record is as good as anybody's and don't you forget it, and if you don't like our assistance, we'll be glad to cut it further. Now, in private, you say whatever you want.

In one of these negotiations I went up from Washington, I wasn't the head of the delegation. I've forgotten who was at the microphone, a very nice young man, but someone criticized the United States, and this young man basically apologized. I went across the street and I said, I want him off that delegation. I had enough clout to do that. Somebody else can be at the microphone, and I want it done differently. Then I took over and the next time that happened I got up and walked out, very unceremoniously. And the man in the chair interestingly enough was an old friend of mine from Pakistan, whom I had known when we served there earlier.

A legendary negotiator by the name of Purushottam, an Indian, one of the best fellows I've ever worked with in the UN, had started going on about how dreadful the United States was, and how we had the worst aid record of any country around the table, and how the percentage of GNP that we devoted to aid was shocking. I then took the microphone and I said, this discussion it not germane to what we're supposed to be doing. When all of you want to focus on the work at hand, let me know. In the meantime, I'm leaving. I turned off the microphone, packed up my briefcase, got up, took the delegates with me. But the Pakistani wouldn't let me get out the door. He gaveled a recess before I could complete the walk-out. And then he and the Indian came over, Elinor, that was a little bit rough. And I said, I'm going to do it every time you criticize the United States into an open microphone. You want to say that sort of stuff, you say it to me privately, say it to the press, say it in your caucus, say it to anyone you want, but you can't say it in a room where I'm sitting at the table. They never did again while I was there. You know, we should have done more of this.

In any case, my view of the north-south dialogue was the same as Dick Cooper's, Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, and all I can say is, thank God for Dick Cooper. Sometimes a controversial fellow. The contract that we were being asked to negotiate with the developing countries (a very unsatisfactory term, but the one we used in those days), was that in exchange for a promise from them that oil prices and supplies would be managed, we, the OECD countries, (again these terms don't mean an awful lot, but the people we're talking about are the Europeans, Japan, United States, Canada), would invite the developing countries to play a more prominent role in deciding how institutions like the IMF and the World Bank would be run. I don't want to get into the technical side of this, it's boring, it's arcane, and after all of these years it is a little bit fuzzy. But basically there are voting procedures in both the IMF and the World Bank which allow the participants, the members, to influence the organizations based more or less proportionately on their contributions. The United States, of course, with the largest contribution to both the IMF and the World Bank, has the largest influence. And what the developing countries wanted to do was to change the voting rules in what looked like a fairly benign way to shift that power balance, and give the recipients of the IMF and World Bank resources, in effect, a majority voice.

Q: That sounds like the road to chaos in a way.

CONSTABLE: But the thing that Dick Cooper figured out right away, and once he did, it was obvious there was no deal to be had, was that the developing countries, the Group of 77, were not in a position then or now to deliver on oil prices or supply.

Q: I was going to ask because the countries with oil are ipso facto non-third world countries.

CONSTABLE: That was a fiction. The OPEC members are part of the group of 77. This is a book. We can't cover all of this in an oral history, but there are all these wonderful UN conventions, rich countries and poor countries.

Q: Saudi Arabia is a poor country?

CONSTABLE: No because Saudi Arabia is different. Well, how is it different? Well, it's just different, it's part of OPEC. But is it part of the Group of 77? Yes. But that's not relevant...it drives me nuts. We were negotiating all of these issues under the guise of different documents, and different agreements. We had something, for example, called the International Development Strategy which was negotiated every four years. There were other pieces of paper, and declarations, and we were being pressured to agree that all developed countries should offer aid that totaled 0.7% of their GNP. I don't know if this is a true story or not, but I always used to take the position in formal negotiations that this was an absolutely ridiculous notion with zero economic merit, and little practical affect. It's not so much that we were opposed to it, but that we were not going to agree to silly things. And that was the end of that discussion. They could talk about it all they wanted, but it was never going to appear in any document that we negotiated.

And somebody came up to me one day and said, you know Elinor, the United States invented that concept. I said, you have to be kidding. No, it was in the OECD in the years when you were trying to get other countries to increase their aid levels, and the U.S. representative...I've never documented this or checked it, a U.S. representative sometime during the '70s or late '60s maybe, at a meeting in Paris suggested that we all pledge to try and meet a target of 0.7% of our GNP. I just looked at him, and I said, that's an idiotic idea, I don't know who proposed it, but he must have been an idiot. I'm not going to support it. I don't care who proposed it.

Q: Excuse me Elinor, but you're the DAS for investment and monetary affairs, and you're talking about UN things. How did this work? Because I would have thought that this would have been a portfolio that had been handed over to our UN people to work on.

CONSTABLE: Most economic issues which required negotiations and interagency delegations were led by the State Department representative out of Washington. This began to change when Joan Spero took over ECOSOC, and Joan herself led a number of delegations. And I think more and more of it is done out of the UN now. But in those days the north-south dialogue was a front burner set of negotiations and issues, and the people at the Under Secretary level in the State Department, and the Treasury Department, were following it very closely. Cy Vance, when he was Secretary was following it, and was concerned. I remember I got a call from Arnie Raphel and he said, the Secretary wants you to be more forthcoming in your negotiations in the UN. I said, what does he want me to do? And Arnie said, he just wants you to be more forthcoming. And I said, that doesn't mean anything, and this is a direct quote, I remember this conversation as if it were yesterday, as far as I'm concerned I go up there and I listen to all that drivel and that's as forthcoming as I'm going to get. Does he want me to give away on sovereignty issues? Is that what he'd like? Well, no, you know how to do it. No, Arnie, I don't know how to do it. What does he want me to give away? The rights of American companies to operate overseas? The rights of American citizens to have their taxes handled in a certain way. What does he want me to give away?

Q: I'm sure you were...oh, God, what did I get into.

CONSTABLE: He just said, Elinor, just do what you can.

Q: From the stance you were taking...in the first place, what was Deane Hinton saying? The election campaign was going on, and obviously a Reagan administration would be not as forthcoming on these things. In other words, you were sort of positioning yourself.

CONSTABLE: But that wasn't why I was doing that. I was basically using the approach that I had been practicing in the OECD and the UN earlier in the negotiations on the code of conduct for transnational corporations, an approach that basically says, this is what makes sense, this is what is reasonable, this is what the United States is going to support. You cannot embarrass us into doing it differently. You cannot shame us into doing it differently. If you bring compelling intellectual arguments to the table, hey, I'll listen to those and maybe we can talk.

The second part of the strategy was to be fairly rough. But very fair. When I was selected, although Marion Creekmore, who was in IO, ceded an awful lot of it to me, to co-chair the U.S. delegation to the 1980 International Development Strategy negotiations, the story came back to me, that when one of the northern Europeans heard that I was coming up to do it, went, oh, no. And whoever he was talking to said, oh, what's wrong? No, I guess it's okay. She's tough, but she's fair when it comes right down to it. That's exactly how I wanted to be perceived.

I didn't change when I worked on the north-south dialogue. I would take my Indian colleague off in the corner, look him in the eye and say, you know this is a bunch of-expletive deleted. And he'd look at me and say, now come on Elinor. And I'd say, you know it is, and you know we're not going to go along with it. Yes, but Elinor, we need a document. Okay, we'll work with you to get a document.

I'd like to tell the story of this negotiation. There were two simultaneous negotiations going on, one, the broad north-south dialogue discussions led by Chuck Meissner (he had taken on the role of special negotiator for most of these issues while I mostly stayed in Washington, and only did selected negotiations). He was debating all of the G-77 agenda: trade, investment, controlling U.S. companies, finance, more G-77 power in the IMF, the terms of trade, charges that we were being unfair to developing countries and exploiting their natural resources, and so on.

I was across the hall negotiating something called the International Development Strategy which had chapters on the same things: trade, investment, finance, energy, corrupt practices, everything. A staff level group had worked for 18 months on the documentation, and now the policy people were supposed to negotiate the remaining differences, and produce a document. There were roughly 120 paragraphs that were bracketed, if I remember correctly.

Q: To bracket a paragraph is...

CONSTABLE: To bracket a paragraph is to indicate that that particular paragraph has not been agreed to. Most of these negotiations followed consensus procedures. You didn't vote up or down, you all had to agree on the language, which is why a lot of it is so watered down. If you could vote up or down, then the Group of 77 would just vote in anything they wanted, and this has occasionally happened, not in anything I was involved in, but it has occasionally happened and to the best of my knowledge the results have been irrelevant. General Assembly resolutions, for example, that state the wish of the General Assembly that certain things happen. They aren't worth much in the real world because they haven't been agreed to by the people who would implement the ideas. So we had this huge document.

Now I decided at the beginning of this three week negotiation that I would like to get a deal, but I didn't tell that to a living soul, because I had people on my delegation who were soft on the issues. I didn't want to raise expectations because I didn't know whether I could get a deal. But the reason I wanted to do it was because we knew we weren't going to agree to any documentation in the negotiation across the hall. If we could agree on the International Development Strategy, the G-77 wouldn't have a leg to stand on if they said the Americans sabotaged the General Assembly special session by blocking the two important negotiations. But, as I say, I didn't want to share that idea with anyone.

I first went to Purushottam (the Indian, heading the Group of 77) and told him there were about 120 paragraphs that I couldn't live with, but that I would do my darndest to get a deal. I didn't tell him I wanted one, and I didn't tell him why. But I did tell him that I would work with him to try and get something. That I wouldn't just gratuitously monkey-wrench the thing. And he believed me, and he trusted me. I told the same thing to Ejaz Naik, who heading the this negotiation, the Pakistani who was there when I had walked out of an earlier meeting. He knew that I wouldn't put up with any nonsense. Again, I said, I'm not going to agree to anything that is a problem for me or my folks back in Washington. But if we can find formulations that somehow accommodate our concerns, I'll work with you and try and get something. And then we went to work. There's a dynamic to these multilateral negotiations. The work expands to fill the allotted time. If you have three weeks to negotiate, you finish the negotiation at midnight on the night before the last day (which is why they should all be two weeks instead of three). And up until that period you work very hard, and position yourself, and scrub the document and struggle and carry on.

The two difficult areas in this negotiation...there were hundreds, dozens, but the two policy areas that were difficult were finance and energy. Energy, of course, was a problem because none of the OPEC countries liked the energy language which said prices shall be reasonable and supplies shall be freely available. The finance language was problematical because it talked about different approaches in the IMF and the World Bank. It implied that developing countries had a "right" to greater resources, and we weren't prepared to go along with that. There were pages and pages of verbiage that outlined these different positions, and we worked and worked. And I took the position throughout these discussions that there were no linkages between energy and finance. That energy prices and supply were quite straightforward, and that the committee ought to be able to agree that anybody that controls these resource ought to play fair in terms of the market, and not artificially run prices up, or withhold supply. That as far as the finance issues were concerned, they could be dealt with in the appropriate institution, the World Bank or the IMF. Well that's not a position that the G-77 is going to accept. We went back and forth on this at length.

Finally there was a session late in the negotiation which ran for 22 hours straight, no breaks for meals or anything. Around 3:00 in the morning I got a terrible headache and I said, has anybody got an aspirin? We were crushed into this room, it was very small, and there were people in the room smoking, and I probably smoked too but it didn't help any of us. We were all exhausted, and I had a headache. And a woman behind me handed me a Midol. Midol is something that I had never taken, it's something that women take for menstrual cramps, not exactly the problem I was having at that point. And I looked at it and I said, "I don't need a Midol, I want an aspirin." And she said, "It has aspirin in it that might help." "All right, I'll take one." Well, I took a closer look at the ingredients. Now traditionally in a long session I would get a second wind with a lot of coffee, of course, and scotch. I had a British colleague who always kept a bottle of scotch in her bag and we would take nips when things got a little wearing, and then coffee with the caffeine and scotch to relax and give you a little lift, and then an occasional aspirin for a headache. Midol has caffeine, a coffee substitute, and a muscle relaxer. So here was coffee, a slug of scotch, and a couple of aspirin all wrapped up in one pill. And ever since then I've been telling men who have to do negotiating, to take Midol with them and put it in little plain wrappers so nobody knows what it is.

By 4:00 a.m. we were all pretty tired. And a colleague of mine from Treasury with whom I had worked earlier on a trade negotiation said, why don't you go and take a rest? This stuff that we're doing right now isn't terribly important. If anything hot comes up I'll buzz you. I thought that was not a bad idea. So I slipped out and went across the street, and found a big leather sofa at USUN, and crashed for about half an hour. The beeper went off, so I jumped up, freshened myself up a little bit, and walked back across the street. Now that particular day it just so happened that I was wearing an outfit that didn't wrinkle, a pink ultrasuede coat and a matching blouse and skirt. I must have been going to a fancy lunch the day before or something. So I walked in at 4:30 a.m. looking band-box fresh, not a wrinkle, hair combed, fresh make-up, sat down and said to my associate, what's going on? He said, they're talking about the IMF. Okay. I waited for a pause, put my flag up. We were in the phase of driving people crazy deliberately which you have to do sometimes...put my flag up, and I started talking about international finance, and why this was a problem, why that was a problem, and getting as abstruse as I could get with my limited economic training. The Argentine delegate across the room climbed over the table, came at me, his tie was askew, he had thick dark hair uncombed, unshaven, his eyes were bloodshot, and he leaned over and snarled, "What is your problem?" And I said, my problem is I completely disagree with your proposal. He stood there panting. And I felt a little bit sorry for him. He was absolutely out of control. He then went back to his chair and his colleagues calmed him down, and we continued.

At around 11:00 a.m. I was about to throw in the towel. We had 50 disagreed paragraphs. I went off to huddle with my delegation, and I cannot take credit for this idea. Somebody on my delegation probably said, why don't we just eliminate all the bracketed language. I thought for a minute, and you know that's brilliant. Why don't we just do it. There wasn't anything at stake here. This was not a document anybody was going to care about, and our concerns were that if very problematical language actually appeared in the document then it would become UN...

Q: ...setting precedent.

CONSTABLE: ...setting precedent, and we'd have to fight it all over again. But there was nothing there on energy, or finance. That was not a problem. So I grabbed a couple of Europeans, including the German delegate, (the European community functions as a unit, they have a chairman and I don't remember who the chairman was). I said, I think we should just drop all of that language. The Germans were shocked. They wanted to go back to Bonn for instructions. And I said, I'm sorry, you're going to have to make the decision because I'm going to do it in five minutes. He said, but you can't, you can't. And I said, I'm going to, and you can either support me, or you can stand up and oppose me. We went back into session...we were in session continuously, but I went back into the room, and I raised my flag, and I said to the chairman, I've been thinking Mr. Chairman, maybe it's time to link energy and finance, and I see some paragraphs here in the energy chapter that I would be willing to delete. And this is why Naik is so brilliant. He understood immediately. The Indian understood immediately. Obviously I couldn't put the whole package on the table. And he sort of went like this to the Indian...

Q: Making a nudging nod.

CONSTABLE: And the Indian said, you know there might be some language in the finance section that we really don't have to have. The next thing we knew, we were on a roll, and the people around the table who wanted a deal realized what was happening, they jumped on it. Yes, yes, yes. By the time the handful of people who had problems with this were aware of what was going on, it was too late. They couldn't step in and stop the momentum. And Naik was just masterful, he just rolled over people. And the next thing you knew, we had agreement. Marion Creekmore came back into the room, and said, what's happening? And I said, we've just deleted 50 paragraphs. I thought he was going to faint, he turned white. Elinor. Don't worry, it will be fine. The Indians were ecstatic. The Iraqi delegate had fallen asleep. We whipped it through before anybody could have second thoughts, and we had an unbracketed text, a great thick document, agreed to by everybody.

I went across the street to Don McHenry's office, and I said, okay, we have a deal on the development strategy, we have an agreed document, it's all done, all the brackets are gone. He looked at me, and said, sure Elinor, very funny. And I said, its true. No, come on, Elinor, and he wouldn't believe this. Joan Spero half believed me. I said, I promise you it is done. Well they've never got over it, Joan never got over it. And, of course, the Iraqis, the ones who wanted to use this session to create the impression that the U.S. was sabotaging this, were thoroughly frustrated.

Q: Well, tell me Elinor, was it implicit in our policy, and your outlook, and from Deane Hinton and then Cooper, etc., that we had to be very careful about aid, or assistance, because many of these countries that were vehement and wanting it naturally, did such a lousy job in administering and using it, or not. How did we feel about that?

CONSTABLE: That wasn't a widespread concern in those days, the way it is today. It was something that a number of individual policy makers worried about. I think Dick Cooper worried about it. I worried about it, but frankly in 1980, I probably would have favored higher U.S. aid. I would not have negotiated it within the UN, I would not have approached the issue in terms of how terrible the U.S. was, and that we needed to behave better, or that sort of thing. But I think I was prepared to put up more money than I am today. I think the people who resisted the north-south bargain were a collection of people who were looking at particular issues from their own particular perspective. Take trade, for example. Trade professionals want by and large an system with rules, with transparency, with fairness, with a GATT, (now a world trade organization) that has the ability to manage the system effectively. We still don't have all of that. But the developing countries wanted managed trade. So the trade professionals on both sides of the political aisle in this country, were very, very leery of the trade provisions in the north-south dialogue.

Then you had the whole series of proposals in the investment area that would require companies from "rich" countries to behave well when they operate in "poor" countries. Again on both sides of the aisle, there was a lot of skepticism about whether the UN should play a role in managing company behavior. Should the UN tell American companies how to operate in the Philippines. I don't think so. So you had a good consensus in those two areas.

In the energy area, of course, you had demands on our part that OPEC couldn't implement even if it wanted to, and I think some of the opposition from the developing countries was reasonable. On the international finance side, you had a more complicated picture. There were a lot of people who felt that the developing countries should in fact have a greater say in how the bank and the IMF operate. But in the end most of the people at the Treasury Department, not all of them, but most of them, even in the Carter administration took a fairly hard line on this, that financial issues should not get mixed up with issues involving justice and poverty. I thought they were right then, I think they're right today. So the U.S. position where it was soft, or where it was accommodating, didn't get very deep into the substance. And what people, I think, were searching for was, a different tone, and perhaps more money for economic development. And the latter was, I thought, reasonable. I disagreed with them on the tone question. I think that in international negotiations, if you're not tough, you get taken to the cleaners.

When the Reagan administration came in, there was an abrupt change in tone. The substance, of course, didn't really change at all, because we had not agreed to any of this stuff in the Carter administration. We were making noises about why should we agree, but we never did. And I think we never would have. When we were preparing the U.S. positions for say an UNIDO or an UNCTAD meeting, I very often asked the question, at what point do we walk out and break it off? And no one could answer. Most of the people around the table felt that, you can't do that period. And again, I always took the position that if you can't get up and walk out, you cannot win in a negotiation. I like Dick Holbrooke's style of negotiating. I watched what he did in Bosnia with great admiration, and with a certain amount of recognition.

When the Reagan folks came in, on the other hand, they wanted to walk out of everything instantly. They wanted to leave UNIDO, leave UNCTAD. They did leave UNESCO. They wanted to walk out of the north-south dialogue, and I found myself turning around and making a different set of arguments for them. Which was don't walk out, because you buy more trouble than that's worth. What you want to do is lower the level of representation, don't send your assistant secretary. Don't send under secretaries. Don't even send deputy assistant secretaries. Send a deputy office director to keep the chair warm, and just chat with people and listen to them, and don't agree to anything. But don't walk out and cut it off because that's provocative. At the end of the day the Reagan administration only walked out of one UN organization, UNESCO. And I supported them on that.

Q: UNESCO at that time was considered to have gotten completely out of control. You might give just a little feel for that.

CONSTABLE: UNESCO wasn't in my bailiwick. UNESCO was handled in IO, so I was just an observer from a distance, and you can get a much better flavor from somebody else. But basically, there were two problem areas. One was management, it was being mismanaged right down to the ground, no accounting, money sort of thrown around on lavish non-germane stuff. It had also become very ideological and somewhat anti-American, anti-western, anti-whatever. It was just irresponsible, and the director general of UNESCO, was an African named M'Bow I think at that time UNESCO might well have been the only specialized agency run by an African. So the Africans were very annoyed at attacks on one of their own, and it just got very tangled, and we walked out. And I think it was appropriate.

Allen Wallis, who was the Under Secretary for the Economic and Business Affairs in the Reagan administration...

Q: He took Cooper's place.

CONSTABLE: No, he actually didn't take Cooper's place, and maybe we better go back and be more orderly about this transition. Let me go back to the middle of 1980 when I told my staff that the Reagan people were going to be coming to town. The first thing I said I wanted them to do was to make sure that every piece of paper they wrote took a different tone. I said, I don't want the term "poor people" to appear in any document that comes out of our office. You can talk about income levels, you can talk about economic growth, you can talk about economic development, healthy economies, sick economies. There are a variety of ways to identify a problem and an issue. But poor people, the term, was a red flag for the Reagan folks. Don't use it. They found that hard, but okay. And I said, let's be rigorous about our economic thinking. Let's think about the UN, and let's think about the economic issues that are under discussion in the UN, and how we want to deal with them. This is one reason why when the Reagan transition folks came in we were in a position to say no, don't walk out of UNIDO. We had thought about it, and we had thought about it for some time. No, don't walk out of UNCTAD. Yes, do an assessment of the World Bank. It's high time that we do that, there's a lot of sloppiness over there. So we were prepared. We had some very sharp people working on these issues, and they were viewed positively by the Reagan team from the beginning.

The first assistant secretary was Robert Hormats, who replaced Deane Hinton. The first Under Secretary was a Washington trade lobbyist by the name of Myer Rashish, and Mike came in in '81 and left in late '82. There was a story that I can't verify. I know it happened, but I can't verify it, I just knew it. Bob Hormats had been in EB as the senior deputy assistant secretary when I was office director, so he and I knew each other. He had moved over to USTR, and I think I talked about the quarrels between State and USTR. He was brought in to be assistant secretary. There was no transition to be dealt with there. Mike, on the other hand was tough...did I tell the story about my first briefing? We had a small group of high economic policy officials that met at the office of the Under Secretary of the Treasury. It included the Under Secretary, the assistant secretary of Treasury, and a couple of senior folks from the Federal Reserve, someone from NSC, the Under Secretary of State, and then I often represented the assistant secretary of State. It dealt primarily with finance, IMF, and fairly arcane issues. Does this sound familiar? Okay. And Mike had just come on board and by then I was on top of the issues, or certainly more so than I was when I took over earlier in the year. Mike was going to be attending his very first meeting at Treasury to deal with these issues, and I was going with him. So I prepared a briefing memo for him. It was one of those packages where you could read the first page, or the first two, or the first five, and you could sort of keep going. You didn't have to riffle through it, it was very easy to get a handle on. I offered to give him a pre-brief. No, he was going somewhere. Then I offered to ride over in the car with him. No, he would meet me there. Fine. So we met there in an outer office, and I said, Mike, do you have any questions about the meeting? He said, yes, what's on the agenda? He hadn't even looked at the paper! These were serious issues that State and Treasury had profound differences on. A couple of them were issues where they looked technical but really weren't. We could get a group of people to agree that, let's do it this way instead of that way, and then all of a sudden you find out that the policy has changed and somebody else is chairing your meetings, and that sort of thing. So I said, oh my God, okay, let's talk about it. So we went over into a corner of this outer room and I said, agenda item one, you can agree with the Federal Reserve, we take their position. Agenda item two, about trade issues, okay. Number three is a real problem, it's kind of technical. I'll handle it for you if you want. Okay? And I'm going along like this as fast as I can just giving him a road map, and then he said, Elinor, let's go outside. And I thought well, that's fine, we shouldn't be doing this here. So we go out into the hall, and we're walking along and as he opens the door, and I'm going, agenda item number seven, and I follow him through the door and he turns around and he says, Elinor, I don't think you want to come in here, it's the men's room. End of briefing. Fortunately Mike did what I told him to do at the meeting. He turned some of the issues over to me. But he wasn't very strong. I don't know why. Whether he didn't like the job. But Hormats, who was a whiz, hated Mike. Hormats and Haig got along very well.

Q: Haig was Secretary.

CONSTABLE: Al Haig was Reagan's first Secretary of State. The next thing I know my husband comes home one evening, and he says, Elinor, I've heard this crazy rumor that Mike Rashish is leaving, that Bob Hormats is going to take his job, and Dick McCormack is going to replace Bob Hormats. Good Lord, where did you hear that? I haven't heard anything like that. He heard it from somebody in New York. Now, Dick McCormack was, oh goodness, how do you describe Dick McCormack?. George Shultz's staff described McCormack as visibly psychotic. That's a good way to start off with the man. I don't know whether he's psychotic or not. I'm not a mental health professional. He's a very, very strange man, had been on Jesse Helms' staff, and was viewed by one and all as a right-wing lunatic. Totally incompetent. And the idea of this fellow as an assistant secretary anywhere was ludicrous. The idea of him as assistant secretary in my bureau was painful. So the next morning I marched in to Bob Hormat's office and I said, Bob, I heard the damnedest story the other day, part is good, and part is awful. Mike is going, you're replacing him, and Bob is sitting there, he doesn't have time to react. And Dick McCormack is replacing you? Bob panicked. Normally Bob Hormats doesn't panic, but in the split second that he panicked, he confirmed the whole thing with his expression. How did she know about this? She's not supposed to know about this. He gave away the next piece of this puzzle-the next piece being Hormats worked out a deal with Haig to move up, to move McCormack into his old job because McCormack would be a weak nobody, and Bob would run the whole thing in the Under Secretary's office-when he told me (I hope Bob never reads this, I never told him I'd figured this out), when he told me he would do everything in his power to prevent Dick McCormack from getting the job. He said, I don't know how in the hell you've heard this, but it's probably true, but please don't tell anybody else. But by telling me he was trying to get rid of Dick he gave the whole thing away. Well, of course, it backfired because Mike, who was booted by Al Haig, had a lot of friends in town, and they turned around and got rid of Bob. And when Haig resigned, remember when Al Haig threatened to quit, threatened to quit, and finally his resignation was accepted in January of '82, Bob was out of there, and went to Goldman, Sachs New York where he's been ever since. And indeed, Dick McCormack was in the wings to become the assistant secretary.

Here is another little known bureaucratic tale which I did not believe at the time. Allen Wallis became the Under Secretary. Now Allen, of whom I am very fond, was not George Shultz's candidate according to a lot of people. I'm not in a position to know because I never asked George Shultz, but a lot of people told me that Treasury and the White House urged Shultz to take him. Shultz was personally fond of Allen, and could see no way to...

Q: What was his background?

CONSTABLE: Allen was an economist, and had been teaching at the University of Rochester for some years. I can't give you his biography.

Q: But in other words, out of the academic.

CONSTABLE: ...academic, and very, very conservative, and very theoretical at times, and not at home in the political arena. But a really fine, fine individual. In any case, I got to know Allen as quickly as I could because suddenly I was dealing with a whole new cast of characters, and I was having fun, I wanted to stay where I was. So I cultivated Dick McCormack. As it turned out too successfully, and I cultivated Allen. The way I go about it is to find a point where I can honestly connect with them. I don't care what it is. It can be bird watching, or beer, or high policy, or photography, something, anything. I can't remember what it was with Allen, but we liked each other genuinely from the very first day, and Allen told me that George Shultz had asked him whether he wanted Dick McCormack as assistant secretary. And Allen had taken Dick to lunch, and decided that Dick was a fine young man, so Allen had gone back and told George Shultz, yes, I think Dick McCormack would make a fine assistant secretary. I wanted to cry. I mean, Dick was a disaster, and I thought to myself, of course, this story isn't true. Allen is telling me this story to convey to me that he has influence, that he is in charge, that EB has to behave.

Well, several years later I asked someone who was in a position to know whether that was true, and he said, yep, that was true. If Allen Wallis had said he didn't want Dick McCormack, George Shultz would not have taken him. George Shultz was relieved when Allen said it was okay, because...

Q: ...he had to do something about Jesse Helms.

CONSTABLE: Yes, he had to do something about Jesse Helms. But it was a high price as it turned out that Shultz had to pay. So Allen came in, and Dick came in January of '83. Dick McCormack then asked me to be his principal deputy. The principal deputy in the economic bureau at the time was a guy named Bob Morris, a very able guy, a little prickly.

Q: From listening to you, I imagine you're considered prickly too.

CONSTABLE: I was considered totally prickly, I'm sure. Bob was a good guy, a smart guy. You know, one of the many people in our business who should have had a post. But anyway, Dick McCormack didn't like him because he had a rough edge. I can be almost like Elizabeth Dole when I have to. I'm not proud of it, but I can do it. And Dick really liked me, and felt comfortable with me. I was horrified, I did not want to be his principal deputy, I wanted to be in charge of my own portfolio, one step removed, with some independence. And this is why I thought that if he felt comfortable, then he'd feel good about having me stay on. And he offered me the job twice, and asked me to go to his confirmation hearings with him to hold his hand. I gave him a lot of good advice at the beginning which he couldn't take. Things like, take it easy, don't worry about learning everything, if you don't know the technical side of an issue, take somebody along who does, take them to meetings, turn to them and let them be the technical part, it makes you look good in the long run when you do that. But Dick was paranoid, he couldn't do that.

And I turned him down twice. One morning he called me up, and he said, Elinor, come up here and bring your briefcase. Okay, I brought my briefcase, and it's amazing because Dick was the most indecisive person. And he said, you are my principal deputy, that was the title, you are my principal deputy, go in there and start working. You know, in our business there's not much you can do when you get drafted like that. So I went next door, and I said, Bob, what the hell's going on here? And Bob was packing, he said, I've been fired, and you're the principal deputy. One day into that job, I went and bought a pack of cigarettes. I had been a non-smoker for something like three years. I was up to three packs a day within two months. I thought I was going to get an ulcer. It was just absolute hell.

You know in our business almost all of us at one time or another, are forced to work for a very, very difficult political appointee. And we're supposed to know how to deal with it. Difficult either because they're incompetent, because they're disagreeable. There are also some wonderful people. I'm not making a pitch that all of them are bad, that's not where I'm coming from. Anyway, Dick McCormack is legendary. Dick was very insecure about his own position, and appropriately so because he didn't know any of the issues.

Q: It's a very technical job.

CONSTABLE: It can be a technical job, but you can adjust for that if you use your people right. He was paranoid, he felt everybody was out to get him. He was violently anti-communist, irrationally anti-communist. Here's a typical conversation, and I don't want to get too deeply into our Central American policy. I was involved in bits and pieces of it, but not the overall political strategy, and I did not agree with it but I wasn't in charge of it, so that didn't matter. In Nicaragua where the sharpest edges of our policy became visible, we were dealing with Sandinistas, Contras, and Somozistas. Dick would get very excited about Nicaragua and Central America and he would try to draw me into discussions about it, and I was very honest with him, I said, Dick, I'm really not comfortable about our policy down there, but I'm not involved with it, I have no interest in trying to change it. If I had been in ARA, I would have been trying to change it. And on the economic side, what we were or weren't doing was relatively straightforward with a couple of exceptions. (When we did sanctions against Nicaragua Tony Motley helped design them to be as sensible as possible.) Well, come on Elinor, what would we do? And I said, honest to God, Dick, I don't know. As far as I'm concerned in Nicaragua the Sandinistas, the Contras, and the Somozistas are all a bunch of bad apples, and I think Nicaragua has been a mess ever since I've watched it, and I don't know what to do next. I kind of tried to stay out of it. And then I said, what would you do? And this is pretty close to a verbatim quote. Well, I would arm the Hondurans, I would arm the Guatemalans, I would send them into Nicaragua with instructions to kill every Sandinista on the spot. Okay. That was his thinking.

Q: What was his background? Where was he coming from?

CONSTABLE: I have no idea. He came from Jesse Helms' staff, and he used to tell me stories about Helms. Dick McCormack told me, for example, that he had ratted on John Carbo, told the FBI that John Carbo was doing something illegal. John Carbo was one of Helms' more notorious staffers who used to create terrible problems for the Foreign Service folks in the field. Why would Dick McCormack tell me something like that?

Here's another Dick McCormack story. Larry Eagleburger at the time was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and we were in the middle of delicate negotiations with Poland and Yugoslavia on debt. We were trying to balance cold war concerns and rational economics, which is not always an easy thing to do. Larry had been ambassador to Yugoslavia so he had a very personal interest in what was going on there. But I was doing the debt negotiations and international finance policy, I spoke for the Department of State at my level, period, and if you were going to the next level up, you had to go to Under Secretary Allen Wallis, (Dick McCormack couldn't handle any of this), or to George Shultz. But you did not go to the regional bureaus or to Larry Eagleburger because you risked people calling banks, and telling them not to do this, or to do that, totally out of the loop. So I was rather rigid about it, and I had good support from Treasury. We had the lines of communications well disciplined, and policy was handled, I think, in a very good, and a very professional way. Dick McCormack, fairly early in 1983, had a meeting with Larry. When he returned he said, come on in my office, I want to debrief you on my meeting. Fine. So I took a little pad and went in and sat down. And he started describing this meeting at some length, he spent about a half an hour giving me a detailed read-out. A couple of the things on debt were rather problematical. So after Dick went off to lunch, I called Bill Montgomery, who was Larry's executive guy, and I said, listen Bill, I understand Dick had a meeting with Larry, and I don't need to know anything about it, but there were two things that came up involving Yugoslavia and the banks, and I'd just appreciate it if you would tell Larry not to do anything about that without calling me, because I need to know what he's doing...and Larry was good about that. He would call me, we were in the A-100 class together so he knew me. And then Bill said, what else went on in the meeting? And I said, Dick described various things and I started ticking off the list. Bill said, wait a minute. I don't understand something. The meeting lasted about five minutes. I'm not making this up. The meeting lasted five minutes. Dick had come back and had invented the entire meeting with Larry Eagleburger. That was scary. That was the first time I realized that there was something really wrong. I then started checking with Shultz's immediate staff because we would get reports from his meetings with Shultz, and I had to double check those because they never tracked. There was just something terribly wrong.

Q: Was this becoming sort of knowledge around? Were others picking this up too?

CONSTABLE: Oh, yes. The Shultz people knew it, Larry knew it. Early on Larry asked me, he said, look, I can't work with Wallis and McCormack. I could do one of them, but I can't do both of them, which one of them should I do? And I said, don't do McCormack because he's irrational, do Allen. Allen is rational. Allen won't agree with you, but he's a rational man, he's an intelligent man, he's a decent guy. Larry could never do it. Larry couldn't abide Allen Wallis. He was never able to work with him, and he used to grumble, you tell me to work with Allen Wallis, I can't work with that guy. But he was never able to deal with McCormack. Shultz understood. Shultz finally got rid of him, and put me in charge of EB, and explained to me that because of the Helms factor, he wouldn't be able to send my name up to the Hill. I was supposed to be the candidate for the OECD in 1985, and Shultz didn't want me to go because of Dick. There's a fundamental choice that as Foreign Service officers we've faced in different ways. With McCormack, the choice was as sharp as it gets. Do you serve the political appointee, or do you serve the organization? Whether you want to call that the Foreign Service, or the bureau that you're attached to, the embassy that you're attached to? If you're a DCM at an embassy under an absolutely impossible wacko ambassador, do you just carry out his orders, and accommodate his or her whims, and let the embassy bear up under that?

Or do you see your responsibility as protecting them, and maintaining the viability of the organization, perhaps at the expense of the political appointee. And it's a tough one. Most of the time you can balance. You can counsel. Say you're a DCM, you can counsel with the political, and the econ, and the admin counselor. You say, come on guys, I know it's rough, take a deep breath, spend ten minutes a day on the nonsense. Make the guy happy. Don't give me a lot of grief because I get enough from him, but we're all in this together, let's be disciplined. There's a lot you can do. With a Dick McCormack on the other hand, there isn't. Say you're the officer in EB in charge of sugar policy. It is your job to keep informed on what's happening on sugar import quotas. At the end of the year if the allotments haven't been used up the unused part gets reallocated. If Asia doesn't use all of its sugar quota, then maybe Central America can pick up a little at the end of the year. All right, you're the sugar guy, your assistant secretary tells ARA it can have all the reallocated sugar this year. What do you do? Okay, yes sir. Or what do you do? This is wrong. This is completely wrong in terms of policy, in terms of process, in terms of bureaucratics, you name it, it's wrong.

Actually McCormack once came to me and told me that he'd done this. So I said, okay, and then I called S/S and I said, by the way isn't it time for your annual tasking memo on sugar? Oh, right. The next day Dick comes in with a piece of paper waving it in my face, how the hell did this happen? And I said, Dick, I didn't lie to him, it happens every year. And it probably would have happened anyway. It certainly would have happened as soon as somebody got wind of the fact that ARA was making off with all the sugar, and then it would have been a huge mess with blood all over the floor. You know, multiply that. Everything was done like that. Everything was done back channel. Everything was secret. He used to send memos, he had a typewriter in his office, he wouldn't show anybody copies. He'd send memos to the Secretary. He classify them all Top Secret so nobody could keep them for posterity. I tried. I'd put them in the bottom of my safe, and I asked my successor...I said, there's a little envelope down there marked McCormack memos. Keep it because your grandchildren will be grateful to you. But he got too nervous about it, he burned them.

One for example was a memo from Dick McCormack to George Shultz, and Dick thought he should run NEA, Near East policy. Dick thought he should run Latin America. Dick once told me, "I could run the Near East bureau with one hand tied behind my back. I could run the Latin American bureau with one hand tied behind my back." This memo, and anyone who knows the Middle East will chuckle. The first line of this memo was: A Saudi prince (protect) recently told me that...now there are what? 500?

Q: 500 Saudi princes, yes.

CONSTABLE: Around 500 Saudi princes. So how in the name of whatever are you going to protect this prince? He wrote another memo to George Shultz in which he said that the only way to get rid of Qadhafi was to "kill the bastard," this is a quote from this memo, and that we ought to send the CIA in to do it.

Q: Did he know about the law by any chance?

CONSTABLE: Well, he didn't know much. He didn't care about the law.

Q: How about George Shultz? Did you find that people were rather quickly by-passing him, and coming straight to you? How did this work?

CONSTABLE: I was the only one who could read certain sensitive stuff. This is where I made the choice fairly early on, that the Secretary, the economic bureau, State Department and the Foreign Service...incidentally the President of the United States who was not being served by this nonsense, would be where my loyalties lay. I would try to contain him. I did several things. For example, he didn't see ERs.

Q: Efficiency reports.

CONSTABLE: Efficiency reports on officers. How did I arrange that? Well, if you're smart you can just make sure. He wanted to write things in peoples' ratings that would have been just awful. And he wanted to use the power of the rating system to intimidate officers. I called the other deputy assistant secretaries together when he made me principal DAS and I said, I cannot protect you from this man in terms of your evaluations because he has to sign your rating. I can't do that for you, but I can do a lot of other things for you. Anytime there's a problem, we will talk about it. If there's a way for me to put myself in front of the train, I will. I don't care about myself. Anytime you want me to do that, I will do it. And I did it over and over again to the point where one of the deputies was so well protected, that Dick wanted to make him the principal deputy, he had no idea what the fellow's real feelings were. Which was fine as long as we could keep it that way. Then I told them, I said, make sure that your people understand that I will stand between them and McCormack, and that they will not suffer. Their ratings will not suffer because I sign them all. I review them all, he can't, so they must not worry about him and their careers. That's an awful thing when anybody...and career people do it as well, not just political people... intimidates other people in terms of their career aspirations in unfair ways, and Dick was just ready to do it.

Q: There must have been a very difficult atmosphere around there when you're trying to by-pass...

CONSTABLE: It was interesting. The rest of the building knew what was going on, and the other regional bureaus dealt with me if they wanted to do any real business. The seventh floor dealt with me if they wanted to do any real business. The Secretary finally reached the point where he would have his staff check and invite me to meeting when they knew that Dick couldn't go. As I say, I almost got an ulcer. And I told Ron Spiers, Under Secretary for Management, I'm not doing this more than two years, it's bad for my health. It was an intolerable situation. I may be prickly, I may be tough, maybe a lot of things, but I am very straight. And being in that position was just intolerable.

Dick, finally absorbed the fact that people would deal with me, but they wouldn't deal with him. He never quite knew what was going on.

Q: He wasn't really aware of...

CONSTABLE: He was, and he wasn't. One piece of it came out in a magazine article. Kai Bird did an article on him in the New Republic, on how the State Department really operated. He interviewed some people who were very indiscreet, and some people up in S/S told him that if you wanted to get something done, you dealt with Elinor Constable.

Q: Wasn't that helpful.

CONSTABLE: Dick got the article, and he read it and he called me in and he handed me the article, and I started to read it. And then he snatched it out of my hands, and I said, wait a minute I haven't finished yet. This article is hysterical, I want to read the rest of it. I grabbed it back, I was trying to collect my wits to know what the hell I'd say to him. And, of course, I'm not going to say, yes Dick, that's right. But there was something in the story about how I handled memos in some way which happened to be inaccurate, and he seized on that, and he said, is this true? And I said, no, it isn't. And it wasn't, and that was the end of that discussion. But you know that was awful.

Here is another example. Allen Wallis felt that we should withdraw from UNCTAD. (UNCTAD, United Nations Committee on Trade and Development.) It was an organization that was supposed to focus on the needs of developing countries. It became a creature of the Group of 77 and was not a very useful organization. Chuck Meissner, when he was the special negotiator, handled UNCTAD. I never went to an UNCTAD meeting. I refused to have anything to do with it, but I didn't think we should withdraw because that would be provocative. But Allen wanted us to withdraw. There were still a few people around who thought that UNCTAD had some utility. I wasn't in that group.

I saw the makings of a strategy, and I went to Larry Eagleburger to see where he came out. He didn't want to withdraw from UNCTAD. And I said, all right, we need to get the Secretary to focus on this in some useful way that will get Allen Wallis on board. So I drafted one of these classic State Department memos with three options. Anybody who has done oral histories has heard about these. And you have an outrageous option at one extreme, and an outrageous one at the other, and then a nice other one...

Q: It's surrender, declare war, or do such and such in the middle.

CONSTABLE: And this one was pull out, accommodate the developing countries, or stay in in a low profile realistic management mode. I've forgotten how we described it. I, of course, would never be able to get that memo past Dick McCormack. So we waited until Dick took a trip, and then I signed it as the acting assistant secretary, and I sent it up. And then it went out to Allen Wallis, and Larry Eagleburger, who were both traveling, for comments before it went up to the Secretary. Allen Wallis, of course, came in with a long note saying no he didn't like this memo because it didn't pay enough attention to the down side of staying in, and there were more arguments for getting out. But, whatever, he voted for option one, which was to get out. And I thought, that's fine, we're ready for this, we'll still get the right decision out of the Secretary. And Larry Eagleburger came in with a cable and it said, while I do not agree with Allen Wallis's position, I do agree with his comments that this is a terrible memo. This memo does not give decision makers enough material to work with in making their decisions. He said it's a little like a Goldi Locks memo, the porridge, is too hot, too cold, or just right. Well I was apoplectic, ran up to Larry's office, he wasn't back yet, and I went in to a staffer, and I started yelling at him, what do you mean? Elinor, calm down, calm down. I will not calm down, we had this wired, this was all set, we talked to Larry about it, it's the only way we can get this to the Secretary, now the whole thing is going to come undone. Elinor, shut up and sit down. People have had to say that to me more than once. We'll get this fixed. You better get it fixed, and I went back to my office. A couple of days later, I went up to the seventh floor for a senior meeting on I don't know what, chaired by Eagleburger. Larry walked in, sat down, looked across the table at me, and said, Elinor, I owe you an apology. And I said, apology accepted. And, of course, everybody around the table said, what in the world was that about? Larry told me later that when he got that cable he was on a plane somewhere and his leg was hurting, and he was in a terrible mood, so instead of viewing the memo as part of a strategy that we had planned, he read it as, is this a good memo. Of course, it wasn't. It was a terrible memo. Shultz checked the right box, we stayed in UNCTAD. Allen always was very loyal to the Secretary, and very good about following policy. So that was the most high stress job I've ever had.

But in retrospect, what I was able to do in those two years was protect that bureau from Dick McCormack. We kept doing our work. People below the deputy assistant secretary level were enthusiastically involved in what they were supposed to be doing. We were able to attract a few good people to the bureau. And Shultz relied on us very heavily for a lot of analysis, particularly on international finance. And everybody in the building by the end of the two years was aware...at the end of a year and a half, Dick left in January of 1985.

Q: Was he just told to leave?

CONSTABLE: How much of this story can I tell? The Secretary had finally decided that he had to get rid of him. I think if you asked George Shultz today, he would say, no, that never happened. Shultz was anything but stupid. He did not want to create problems with the Helms folks, and Helms used Dick McCormack for his own purposes. So the first thing they did was offer him a small embassy. I've forgotten which one it was, some place in Central America on the theory that Dick was fascinated by Central America, but he didn't want to go. I think it was Costa Rica.

Q: It sounds like Costa Rica it being relatively small.

CONSTABLE: Yes, and I think that was the idea. And Dick said, no. Dick had a wife and two small children and they didn't want to leave. She had a nice job. She wasn't the overseas type. So they realized they would have to offer him a job in town. They also understood that they couldn't ask him if he wanted to do it. He loved what he was doing. They had to tell him to resign, and then offer him another job. That's what they did. They asked him for his letter of resignation. And he came in after all of this and sat in my office on a chair...I had a chair next to my desk that was too short, not deliberately, I never used it, almost nobody used it. He sat in that chair that was very short and said, Elinor, why is he doing this to me? Why is he asking me to resign? I'm doing a wonderful job. I have letters from half the Cabinet saying what a wonderful job I'm doing. You know, the kind of bread and butter letters you get. Why is he doing this to me? At that, I couldn't say anything, usually I would have something...I couldn't even say, I don't know. I just couldn't say anything. And he was absolutely pathetic. But it was very difficult. People would come up to me. At least a hundred times, different people, people I didn't know very well, would come up to me and say, how do you stand it? And I'd say, one of the ways I handle it is having people like you come and ask me that question, and that makes me think that I am doing something. In the fall of 1984, I went to Ron Spiers and I told him that after the elections it was going to be him or me. If they wanted to get rid of McCormack fine, let me know. I'd stay through any transition and I'd do anything the Secretary wanted. If it was their feeling that McCormack had to stay, I was out of there. Ron scowled at me in a friendly way. I said I'll be in your office on the second Wednesday of November, at 8:15 a.m. for the answer to the question. Actually, I think I waited until Thursday. Ron looked at me and said, it's him. I said, okay, but I'm not waiting beyond January. By January he was gone, I got a call in Paris to get on a plane and come back. I love George Shultz, I loved working for him.

Q: He comes out as the best Secretary of State. Of all the Secretaries of State, I hear about these things.

CONSTABLE: I'm biased. He liked me so I liked him, it's hard to be objective about it. But he did a lot of wonderful things. He paid attention to policy. He paid attention to people. He was tough and mean and impatient. He was not a softy. It is a great, great myth to think George Shultz was just a sweet nice guy. I think he's the only Secretary of State who has ever intimidated me. Al Haig didn't intimidate me. Al Haig would yell at you, swear at you, but that wasn't intimidating. But with George Shultz, if he was looking at you and his eyes started to narrow, you were in trouble. You were either saying something stupid, or boring, or wrong...I was never quite sure which one of those it was. More than once his eyes narrowed at me, and sometimes when I knew I was right, I would just keep going. And he would listen. And sometimes he would say, I never thought of that. I mean, that is a big man.

But basically, the Dick McCormack years were managing the bureau, keeping people functioning. Letting people know that I would stand between them and any problems.

Q: After all, the assistant secretary for Economic Business Affairs, would go out and make speeches, and stuff like that. This is the public face of the State Department as well as going to meetings abroad.

CONSTABLE: He once gave a speech...I think I do have this in my files, on the debt crisis. He thought he singlehandily solved the debt crisis in 1982. He described the debt crisis as like an automobile accident. Your version of the accident depends on where you were standing when it happened. He gave that speech. He actually stood up and gave that speech.

Q: How about negotiations? Did he get involved in negotiations?

CONSTABLE: He never did any serious negotiating. He did a lot of ceremonial negotiations. There was an awful, awful incident. Tezi Schaffer is responsible for this as a matter of fact. You know how proper and serious Tezi can be.

Q: You might say she is the head of the Foreign Service Institute right now.

CONSTABLE: Tezi was the deputy assistant secretary for trade. Dick McCormack had gone off to a meeting of IFAD, another useless organization, International Finance and Agricultural Development, an organization created out of whole cloth, loosely attached to FAO in Rome, to recycle oil money, and it never really achieved any of its objectives. It's still around, I can't believe it. So there was an IFAD meeting and I said, Dick, why don't you go. It was not an unreasonable thing for him to do. It would get him out of town. By then I was really at the end of my tether. The day he came back I was having a meeting in my office. At the end of that meeting, I said, well I guess we'll go in and listen to the IFAD debriefing. And I can hear it now, he's going to start talking about IFAD, and he's going to say that IFAD is a very useful organization, and that he met a lot of fascinating people, and that he persuaded them to do a number of useful things. And a little later we went into his office for his staff meeting, and he opened the meeting and started to talk about IFAD, and he said exactly what I said he was going to say, just the exact wording. I would have been fine if Tezi Schaffer, who had been in the pre-meeting, hadn't started wiggling her eyebrows. She looked at me, and she started to wiggle her eyebrows. She didn't laugh but you could tell she was close to losing it. Then another fellow, Paul Mcgonagle, was twitching the right side of his mouth, and that was it. I just lost it, I started to laugh. Well, you can't laugh at your assistant secretary. So I pulled out a handkerchief, and clasped it over my face pretending to sneeze to get myself under control, but I couldn't. So I took a piece of paper and started to try to read it to settle myself, and I thought I'll read half of this piece of paper, and I'll take a deep breath and then I'll be all right because I knew I didn't want to do this. And Dick reached around and took another piece of paper and threw it at me, and he said, when you're through with that, read this. I said, all right, and I started reading the second document because he had thrown me right back into a laughing fit. It was a terrible scene. I felt bad about it because that was just not nice, and I never should have done that. But it was unbelievable. I always blamed Tezi for that.

There was one other issue during that period that I think is worthy of some attention: the role of the State Department in international economic affairs. Shortly after Shultz came on board in 1982, Don Regan, who was then secretary of the Treasury, said George, don't you think it's time to correct this anomaly that has a State Department person negotiating debt rescheduling. Debt, after all, is a Treasury issue. And Shultz said, yes, Don, that probably makes some sense. Chuck Meissner was still doing the Paris Club, I was just about to pick it up. We've talked about the Paris Club I think.

Q: No, I don't think so.

CONSTABLE: International debt negotiations in Paris to manage the debt crisis. After Regan's note, Paul Boeker, head of Policy Planning, Larry Eagleburger, Charles Meissner, myself, Allen Wallis and several others, asked for a meeting with the Secretary. For me the purpose of the meeting was to keep debt negotiations at State, but other people wanted to turn the meeting into a discussion of the role of the Foreign Service in economics. The meeting immediately degenerated into a lament, I can't remember who led the whining, about economic officers, and how they weren't treated well, and they didn't get enough promotions, and this didn't happen, and that didn't happen. And I took the palm of my hand...I was so impatient with all of this, and I slammed it down on the coffee table. I said, dammit, here we go again and the Secretary looked at me, somewhat bemused, and said, yes, Elinor? And I said, I'm sorry sir, but here we go again talking about perks for economic officers when we don't even know what the State Department should be doing. What's the role of the State Department? The perks derive from that. And he said, a fair question. What is the role? And I said, I have a view, others may have a view. I said, why don't we prepare a short statement as to what we think it ought to be. And he said, fine. So we prepared a paper arguing that the Department, because it doesn't have a constituency, is better positioned than any of the other agencies around town to represent a cross-section of interests in international economic negotiations. Nobody buys that theory, but that's what we argued. That's what I still believe.

A second point that we made in that paper, which was what I really wanted to get into his head, was that, given the way Washington operates, the only way you can be part of the process is to have a legal seat at the table: i.e., the only way we could stay in the international finance game was to be in charge of debt negotiations. That's our handle. Treasury makes policy, we negotiate it. But the negotiator will be at the table when they're making the policy, and without that we have a big problem. He told Don Regan, no. I was very proud of that. We came this close to losing that responsibility. He told Don Regan no, and Don accepted it. At one point Beryl Sprinkle, the Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs, called the deputy secretary, John Whitehead, to argue Treasury's case, and he said, look, as long as Elinor Constable is doing the negotiations, we don't have a problem. I said, okay. And I was the debt negotiator for three years and by the time I left the issue of moving it to Treasury was completely dead. As we thrashed out that set of issues with the Secretary, we produced a fair amount of wisdom, but we did not influence events as far as I can tell. We still struggle. We have lost even more economic authority than we had then.

Shultz didn't like bureaucratic infighting, but he understood the need for us to be a player on economic issues. In late 1985 Treasury came out with the first Baker Plan to solve the international debt crisis. I got a bootleg copy. It was not shown to anybody outside of Treasury. Baker gave a copy to George Shultz, and said this is Eyes Only for you. Well, you know how that works. Shultz gave it to the new assistant secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, a political appointee by the name of Doug McMinn. So I went to Doug, and I said, I need the paper. Doug was fairly new to State and nervous about ignoring the "eyes only" but he gave it to me. And it was a horror, it was an awful, awful paper. My staff wrote a critique and Doug and I took that back up to the Secretary. Then the Secretary and I rode over to Treasury, and sat in Jim Baker's office, and told Baker, no. That's why I think Jim Baker has a problem with me. So, while George Shultz deferred to Treasury on a lot of...

Q: He had been Secretary of the Treasury.

CONSTABLE: He had been, and he had a lot of respect for Treasury, but he was also more than prepared to walk in and say, this doesn't make sense. The other thing I did which Baker may have found out about, was give a copy to the Fed. They didn't even tell Paul Volcker that they were doing this, much less ask him to look at it.

Q: Paul Volcker by this time had moved over.

CONSTABLE: He was head of the Federal Reserve, and he's still there. So I arranged for Paul to get a copy. So Paul and George Shultz and I went to Baker's office and said, you can't do it this way. And Baker said, okay, and turned to his then Under Secretary, a guy named David Mulford, and said, David rewrite it. Richard Darman, the deputy secretary of Commerce was also there. What came out in version two was the right thing at the time, which was the fall of 1985. It was premature to start writing off debt so we came out with a kind of a deal. The Baker Plan called for more structural adjustment in the debtor countries, more World Bank lending, more private bank lending as the countries became more credit worthy. Of course, it wasn't a plan, it was a description of a process that, if followed, would work, a slightly different thing. Baker understood that. That was the right thing. But anyway, Shultz had a lot of respect for Treasury, and we did too.

I have always felt that it's important for the State Department to have a strong role, but you also need a strong Treasury. You don't want a bunch of klucks over there. If you have a meeting of the minds, the stronger you are at Treasury, the more secure you are about your own ideas, and your own ability to make policy, implement policy, and manage events. It's the weak people that are the hardest to deal with because they're always trying to minimize your role so that they're not threatened. If they're secure, they're much more comfortable with you having a role, and they will listen to you.

CONSTABLE: There's an organization called the Paris Club, in existence for a number of years, which meets regularly in Paris. The Paris Club is the informal title that the official creditors gave to themselves when they began meeting informally as a group. It has no legal status. Its not a part of the UN system, or part of the OECD, or anything like that. It's an informal gathering of creditors.

Q: When you say creditors, are you talking about banks?

CONSTABLE: That's an important distinction. I'm talking about governments. Governments who meet to discuss how to handle official debt to countries who are having difficulties repaying the debt. Before 1982 the Paris Club was almost invisible, didn't meet very often. For anyone who has a serious interest in the Paris Club, I would refer you to several books that have been written about it.

In 1982, we saw the beginning of what everyone insisted on calling the international debt crisis, and different people had different ideas about what it really was. Debt crisis was, as it turned out, not a good term but it's what we all called it. It was precipitated when the government of Mexico announced that it was not going to be able to pay some debts that were coming due at the end of that particular month. I seem to recall that it was August, but I could be wrong about that. This was the first time in anyone's memory that a government had threatened, in effect, to go into default on its loans. So there was quiet hysteria. I remember a fellow who was working for me by the name of Bill Milam, (now Chargï¿½ in Liberia, and who probably knows more about international finance than anybody. He's still on active duty in the Department), went scurrying over to the Treasury Department to sit with the Treasury officials as we all tried to figure out what in the world to do. And there were a number of short term fixes applied. There was an emergency infusion of cash. We probably used the General Agreement to Borrow, the (an informal arrangement among key governments under which they can draw on certain resources to provide quick fixes to deal with liquidity problems). A liquidity problem meaning, you're not going to get paid until Wednesday, you owe something on Monday, okay, I'm going to give you a little something to tide you over to Wednesday. Actually, I hate comparing international economic issues to a personal finance because it's a comparison that breaks down on the fundamentals. But, basically that's what it is. I know you're going to get paid on Wednesday, and I know that you can make good on what you owe on Wednesday, you can't do it today. I'm not too worried, so I'll give you a little short term, like a bridge loan. We basically did that for Mexico.

But then as we looked at the situation with Mexico, and as it turned out a number of other developing countries, a pattern began to emerge which I'm sure a number of thoughtful, observant, intelligent people had flagged, but nobody was listening. The problem was the so-called debt crisis. Governments had borrowed more funds than they could easily repay, and they found themselves caught in a situation where their receipts from trade, for example, simply weren't enough to cover the service on their debt.

There were two very crude, broad categories of debtor countries. One group, mostly in Latin America included countries like Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, a number of others, where the underlying economic conditions were perhaps difficult, but where you could imagine a scenario under which in the fairly short term, two or three years, it varied with each country, with a little bit of belt tightening, and a little bit of debt reorganization, or debt rescheduling (which is what we did in the Paris Club, that was our contribution), the country in question could put things in order and begin repaying its debt. In fact, today, 1996, this is exactly what has happened. Mexico doesn't have that kind of a debt crisis. Mexico had another short term problem last year, but that was a different scenario. Brazil was the largest Latin American debtor. And when we rescheduled Brazil's debt we were rescheduling several billion dollars.

I want to go back and describe what a debt rescheduling is. It's like refinancing a mortgage, again to use a crude personal comparison. You take the debt coming due during what's called a consolidation period. A consolidation period can be anywhere from six months to twelve months, to two years, to three years. When I was doing the Paris Club I took the position that you couldn't have a consolidation period that extended beyond twelve months because things were too fluid, and you just couldn't predict. So you would add up everything that was coming due to official creditors during that period. (Now, this did not include the World Bank. The World Bank did not reschedule its debt. It did not include the IMF. The IMF did not reschedule its debt. What the IMF and the World Bank just continued to lend money to cover the old exposure.) In any case, we would add up all the money that was coming due, say in 1983. Then we would spread those payments out over an extended period-five years, ten years. The governments in question were expected to pay some earnest money up front to show that they would maintain the payments that had been agreed to. It was a full scale negotiation with all the trimmings, all-nighters, and emotional to and fro, and cliff hangers, and posturing. It was a point of pride with countries that they had never "had a Paris Club." A few years later when I went to Kenya as ambassador, the president of Kenya told me, you know Kenya has never gone to the Paris Club. And it had not, and it was ironic because here I was an expert in the Paris Club, every other African country had gone to the Paris Club, but not Kenya.

A second group of countries that were in trouble in the '80s, were countries where the underlying economic fundamentals were extremely bleak. Countries that were not earning, and were not in a position anytime in the near future, to earn enough through exports or other means to service their debt. Countries mostly in Africa which had borrowed...as I think I've said earlier in the interview, I have been an economic official for most of my professional life, but I am not a highly trained theoretical economist. I hope that serious economists avoid the kind of terms that economic officials throw around quite liberally, like "excessive." Everything is "excessive." They borrowed excessively. Well, what's borrowing excessively? There's no precise economic definition for this, but in any case, governments borrowed. And the classic take on this was that governments borrowed, and didn't invest the money that they borrowed, wisely.

In the case of Mexico in the '80s there was a loss of confidence in the government because of economic management, and this resulted among other things, in capital flight.But the important point about capital flight is that if you're dealing with a non-convertible currency, the capital flight is going to be in a convertible currency. So the United States would lend dollars to Mexico, and as those dollars worked their way into the system, and into the hands of somebody who didn't have confidence in the Mexican government, those dollars went right back out, and didn't result in any constructive, or permanent, or useful economic change, or economic activity within the country. So you had a very complicated set of problems with liquidity as one of the principal factors in one group of debtor countries.

But the second group of debtor countries had more fundamental developmental problems. The debate over what to do about debt, which still goes on and has been, I think, somewhat simple-minded, tended and still tends to emphasize the fact that these are poor people, and they can't pay it back, which is an interesting concept if you're lending money. I don't lend money to somebody unless I think they're going to pay it back. I'll give them money if I think they won't pay. And bit by bit we tried to restructure some of our aid programs so there was a higher grant component, less lending in countries that really couldn't service their debt.

As the Paris Club, which had been operating very quietly, got involved in the debt crisis it started meeting every month. My predecessor as deputy assistant secretary for International Finance and Development, was among other things the representative to the Paris Club. But then Chuck left in 1983 to go to New York to work for Chemical Bank, so the question arose what to do about the Paris Club. While we were looking for a replacement for Chuck, a particularly controversial meeting was scheduled on the issue of Poland.

The Polish case was somewhat different in the following sense. Poland had serious economic difficulties. Poland had borrowed too much money. In the '70s and early '80s when we were looking for ways to connect with Eastern Europe-then Eastern Europe-U.S. banks, and the U.S. government, Ex-Im Bank, and some others made loans to the government of Poland. When Jaruzelski took over and repressed the solidarity effort we responded, as we often do, with sanctions. They were all the standard sanctions, no assistance, no transactions of this kind or that kind. Then someone had the bright idea to ban debt rescheduling for Poland, should Poland need it, which was very foolish because the Poles then declared a moratorium on all payments to official creditors. They had been making a few payments. They hadn't been keeping up their schedule of payments, but they had been paying something. And since we wouldn't reschedule their debt, they were perfectly within their rights to stop paying and say, we're ready to reschedule and agree on a stream of payments anytime you want to. And we said "no," and that was supposed to be an economic sanction which was, of course, idiotic.

We had to go back to Paris and sit at the table, and tell all the other creditors that no, the United States was not ready to agree to negotiate with the Poles. And we were the only government taking that position. So I thought I better go over and do it. I didn't want to send my deputy, this was too delicate. So that's how I got involved in the Paris Club. I took care of the Polish issue, and as I looked at the issue it occurred to me that this was really a pretty silly sanction. We were, as we do so often in foreign policy, shooting ourselves in the foot in an effort to create a problem for somebody else. So I tried to get the policy turned around. There were a number of people in Washington who agreed that as long as they didn't have to be too visible on this issue, they would support a modification of our policy. I did what you do in Washington to get that done: you write memos, you make phone calls, you have meetings, you chip away and keep working on it.

One of the people who was dead set against doing this was George Shultz. I couldn't get to him on it. None of the arguments I made...

Q: You say you couldn't get to him...you talked to him.

CONSTABLE: I talked to him about it, not one-on-one, but I just couldn't persuade him. I remember one particular meeting. There were about a dozen of us in his conference room to discuss Poland. The assistant secretary for European Affairs at the time was a fellow by the name Rick Burt, a very self-confident fellow who doesn't like anybody dealing with his issues, thank you very much, except on Polish debt where he was happy to have me do it. When Polish debt came up, he said, Mr. Secretary, ask Elinor about it, because he didn't want to stand up and carry water on the issue. The Secretary said, the Poles got themselves into this mess, they can blank-blank well get themselves out of it. End of discussion. He stood up to signal that the meeting was over, and everybody at the table stood up except me. (I don't know why he put up with me.) I sat in my chair and I looked up at him, and I said, Sir, I have one more question. He glared at me, sat down and said, what is it? And I said, well, Mexico got itself into it, Brazil got itself into it, the Ivory Coast got itself into it, all the countries have done the same thing. I just want to make sure I understand your policy, and your view on this. Is it your view that we should just let them all twist in the wind too? And he looked at me, and he said, no, they're different. And I said, how are they different? And he said, they're not communist countries. And then he realized that that really wasn't adequate, and he started to explain it. I said, no, that's all right, I understand your position now, sir, thank you very much, and I stood up. And the meeting was over.

I don't know whether that was the beginning of softening him up, or not. The way I finally persuaded him to agree that I could go back to Paris and reschedule Polish debt, which I did, was to argue that debt rescheduling was either a carrot or a stick depending on what you did next. If we kept all the other sanctions on, and refused to trade with Poland, and refused to grant them any Ex-Im credits, or normalize the relationship in any other way, then a debt rescheduling would enable us to squeeze hard currency out of this poor country. Because part of the debt rescheduling would be the earnest payments up front. So it could be a stick. If, on the other hand, a year or two from now we decided we wanted to normalize the relationship, a debt rescheduling would have to be part of that process. But we were not at that fork in the road, and I put it just like this to him. We are not at the fork in the road, we are far away from that, and we can still treat this as a nasty option. And that's when he said, okay.

So I finally had a position paper, and I was told-I've never believed it, but I was told that the president personally signed off on it because it was such a delicate issue politically. Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO, had to give his okay. By then we had been going back and forth enough so that I knew all the other delegates around the table and they had come to trust me. We agreed on a position and I said, okay, I can agree on this but I may have to tell you tomorrow at breakfast that it's all off because I don't have a green light yet. I'm expecting it around 4:00 a.m. I did, I got it about 4:00 a.m. a phone call saying, Elinor, it's okay, you can go ahead. So we rescheduled Polish debt.

Sometime later I worked with the Yugoslavs on their debt problems and the Poles were a piece of cake compared with the Yugoslavs.

I think what the Paris Club did in the Polish case was extremely helpful. I think what the Paris Club did in the cases of Brazil, and Mexico, and some of the other key creditors was also very helpful. We negotiated with their treasuries. The Paris Club worked like all negotiations with an enormous amount done behind the scenes. You had an open session where the creditors met with representatives from the debtor countries, usually the heads of their central bank and treasury and other officials. They presented a proposal which would include the amount of debt they wanted to reschedule, the length of the consolidation period, and the percentage of the payments that they wanted to reschedule. You could reschedule from 50% up to 100%. I don't think we ever did 100%, just as a matter of principle. But you could. You could reschedule previously rescheduled debt if the problems were intractable. There were many other small variables you had to deal with. After they gave us a proposal they would leave the room. We would then negotiate among ourselves. I would always have Treasury experts with me, and they would crunch all the numbers, and then they would start showing them to me. Well, we could do this, or we could do that. And I'd say, I don't want numbers, I want words. I want bigger, smaller, higher, lower, I want to know whether I have to pull everybody around the table up to a more-generous was the word we used, I don't like the word-but generous proposal, or whether I need to beat them back. I have to get some dynamics here. I did the Paris Club for about three years, and about 99% of the time the U.S. proposals were the ones that the Paris Club took back to the debtor.

Q: Tell me about the dynamics within the Club. What about the Polish thing? If we were pushing the Poles into a corner where they weren't going to pay anything, I could see the other countries...you're making it impossible for them to pay us too.

CONSTABLE: That's exactly right.

Q: I mean were they bringing all their pressure to bear, not just on you, but their president would be calling the prime minister, calling our president, saying, what the hell are you doing?

CONSTABLE: I don't recall very much activity at the head of state level. There certainly was activity at the cabinet level. The Treasury secretary got plenty of messages on Poland. The Secretary of State got plenty of messages on Poland. It was well known at very high levels that people were unhappy with our position. But this was the Reagan administration, and the Reagan administration had issues like this in a number of areas. The gas pipeline sanctions against the Soviet Union back in 1981, for example. There were a number of instances where we wanted to push more vigorously against the Soviet Union than Europeans did. And this was just one of several. But yes, there was a lot of frustration, and there was a lot of pressure. What I basically conveyed to the other delegates was, we're rethinking our position. I cannot promise you that it will change. It may not. But you have to give us the time to take a look at it, because right now if you ask us to agree to rescheduling, our answer is no. A month from now it may be maybe, two months from now it may be yes, I don't know, or it might stay as no. But you have to give us time. I would often tell people it didn't help if they pushed too hard.

Q: I particularly think of the French, and maybe to another extent the Canadians who in other instances...I know nothing about this, take a certain delight in sticking it to the United States. Did you find any of that taking place?

CONSTABLE: Well, now this is interesting. No. And how to explain this? These were mostly economic officials. It happened a little, and there were some French who, of course, were very impatient with us because of exactly what you describe. Our position made it impossible for them to get repaid. Worse than that, the banks couldn't get repaid. The banks at the London Club can't go ahead, and don't want to go ahead, and reschedule their debt until the official creditors have set some parameters. So we were all under a certain amount of pressure from the banks. I used to meet with the banks who claimed that the U.S. government, and the State Department in particular, had pressured them to lend money to Poland, and therefore we had an obligation to arrange things so they could start getting repaid. I told them that that was absolute nonsense, and I added that I wouldn't buy a single share of stock in a bank that took its orders from the State Department. What is the matter with you guys? They would half smile. Sure, we made our position clear that we wanted them to lend the money. That part was true. But their decision was based on a variety of factors, up to and including the fact that they could do good business by lending money to Poland. They were wrong. That was their mistake. So there was pressure from the banks. And as I say, we finally did negotiate, or agreed among ourselves, that we could go ahead and negotiate with the Poles. The Poles were led by a fellow named Karsch who looked like the fellow who used to be on the cover on MADD magazine, Alfred E. Neuman. Exactly like Alfred E. Neuman...

Q: Big ears...

CONSTABLE: Big ears, and large toothy grin, and large features, and my deputies on my delegation would say, here comes the MADD magazine fellow, and it was hard. But we were ready to proceed but the Poles weren't. They wanted to tie the debt rescheduling to a resumption of other official credits. And we said, no, we can't do that. Obviously, when they rescheduled their debt they were going to have to give us...I think I figured we got about $20 million out of it, that we otherwise wouldn't have gotten. So where are they going to get that money? They have to squeeze, and they need more foreign currency coming in to accommodate this. We said, no, sorry, you can reschedule your dept, period, nothing else. This went on and on in a series of meetings.

It was climaxed at a dinner at a small Paris restaurant, for once in my life I can't remember the restaurant. I love Paris restaurants, and I'm famous for being able to tell you what we ate on any given day. At this particular meeting there were six countries. UK, France, Germany, Japan, United States, and three members of the Polish delegation. I had flown over that day and I was tired, and it was midnight, and Karsch started talking about Polish farmers, and how hard they work, and about Polish coal miners, and how hard they work, and how everybody has to struggle, and that they just must have this foreign currency, and couldn't we understand, and couldn't we at least...and on and on. I finally took my napkin and threw it on the table, and said, I don't give a damn about your farmers, or your coal miners, or anybody else in Poland. I came here to reschedule your debt. If you want me to do that, fine, if not fine, I'm leaving. And I started to get up and I think Karsch or somebody said, no wait, no wait. I said, no and left.

The next morning they started negotiating the debt rescheduling. Several years later the chairman of the Paris Club said that dinner was the breakthrough. I said, really, I have to tell you I was tired from traveling. I really lost patience with him. He said, no, no, it was wonderful. It was wonderful.

Q: It strikes me though, in so many cases I do these interviews that the United States is probably one of the almost unreliable, with the biggest game in town, but at the same time we're not very reliable because politics intrude all the time. Where in most other countries, particularly in the economic field, profit-loss, the normal laws of economics take place.

CONSTABLE: I think that's a real issue, and a real concern. One of the things I liked about the Reagan administration's international economics policies was that by and large we didn't let politics intrude. Now, it's hard talking about these issues without really getting into them. I don't think you can separate politics and economics. When I taught at Georgetown after I came back from Kenya, I used to do a presentation in which I put four columns up on the board, one was economic issues, one was political issues, and then there was economic issues with a high political content, and political issues with a high economic content. And I said, okay, now let's fill in these columns, and I wouldn't let anybody put anything in column 1 or column 2, because there isn't a significant economic issue that doesn't have a significant political component, and vice versa. There are no political issues without an economic dimension. The trick is to understand what those implications are, and deal with them appropriately. If you're going to ask a government to repay its debt, there's going to be a negative political fallout back home. You need to know that. What you don't need to do is to say, oh gosh, we don't want that to happen. Okay, don't pay your debt. It isn't introducing politics to the economic process, or vice versa, that's the problem. It's introducing it inappropriately.

Now the Reagan administration, and I'm a Democrat mind you, I'm a yellow dog Democrat, and I'll never register as a Republican. But the Reagan administration by and large did a rather good job of dealing with the international economic issues from an economic perspective with the political considerations being integrated appropriately. There were exceptions to that. I think some of the Cold War stuff got out of hand. The sanctions against Nicaragua almost got out of hand. The sanctions against Poland were silly.

I'll give you one of my favorite examples, Peru, which was my very first debt rescheduling. We were meeting on Poland to thrash out whether we could proceed with anything. At that same meeting there were two formal debt reschedulings, one on Ecuador and one on Peru. Ecuador was the first one, and the U.S. position argued for, among other things, rescheduling 65% of the debt coming due during the consolidation period, which is fairly low. I asked the Treasury fellow where the other people around the table would be on that, and he said they weren't even sure there should be a rescheduling. They probably are going to want to reschedule even less, so our job is going to be to persuade them to go up to 65%. We got into the negotiation, we found that, on the contrary they all wanted to come in around 85%, which is "more generous" to use that bad term. So I said, no, 65% is the right figure. And they pounded me. They absolutely pounded me. Then the Treasury fellow said, maybe I better crunch these numbers again. I said, fine, feel free. So he spent the night crunching the numbers. The next morning he said, you know, Elinor, I think it ought to be 90%. All right. So I went in and I said, well actually, we have looked at the numbers as we said we would do, and now we think it should be 90%. Well, more outrage around the table. And I said, just calm down. I'm doing exactly what you told me to do. You asked me to look at the numbers. I did. Now it should be 90%. That was not a good beginning in terms of the Paris Club creditors. It was, however, a very good beginning with Treasury, because the Treasury fellow said, my God, she doesn't mind fighting with people. She doesn't mind being tough, and we bonded there and then and did fine. I think we did 85% as it ended up.

Peru had financial problems which continue to this day, and they wanted more generous terms than we were prepared to offer. The Peruvian Minister of the Treasury called the deputy U.S. Treasury secretary, and said that the Paris Club U.S. delegate was being much too tough. So a Treasury fellow called me at my hotel and said, I hear you're being too tough. And I said, where do you hear that from? And he told me. And he said, maybe you should ease up a little. And I said, if you want to send me new instructions, go ahead and be sure to clear them with my staff at the State Department. If you want to send a cable saying that State is being too tough, I'll be happy to receive it. Then, of course, I called my office and told them not to clear anything. The meeting continued, then we had a reception. I went up to the Peruvian finance minister, and I said, I hear you think I'm being too tough on you. Of course he thought that his phone call was privileged. He said, I don't know who told you that. I said, the fellow you called in Washington told me that. He said, oh, no, I don't think that. I said, I'm glad because I don't intend to change my position. And that was the end of that discussion.

But coming back to your broader question. I think we did a better job of giving economics an appropriate role than we're doing today. You had George Shultz at State who had a lot of respect for economists, and for the Treasury people. And I took the position in debt reschedulings that once the country got to the Paris Club, the only considerations would be economic. Occasionally I would get some nervous fellow from one of the embassies who would want to sit in, and I'd say, only if you sit in the back of the room and don't say anything. He'd want to talk to me about the poor suffering this, or our problems with the president, or something or other. I took the position, again with good strong backing, that in this room those issues were absolutely irrelevant.

Now Treasury itself violated its rules when it dealt with Brazil. Treasury was terrified of Brazil because their exposure was so huge, and if Brazil had actually defaulted it would have been a serious problem. Now, if you just don't get around to paying your debt, you're late, that's in effect a default. But if you haven't announced that you're not going to pay in the future, banks and the international financial system, and creditors, can live with that for a while. What they can't live with is a formal declaration that you are not going to pay. That puts you in default, and then everybody gets hysterical. So, one of the things I used to do was to try and persuade governments to avoid that.

I had an interesting one-on-one with a famous Nigerian Finance Minister who had a name we couldn't pronounce, we all called him Triple-A. I said, I know you can't pay, don't pay, but don't say you're not paying. To the creditors it makes a huge difference. And don't tell the IMF that you want a multi-tiered exchange rate. This is a no-no to orthodox economists. You've got to have a single free rate. You can't manage it. Of course, everybody does but you're not supposed to. And you're certainly not supposed to manage a two or three tiered rate. But I said, you have an official rate, and you have a black market, just push a little more into the black market, or a little less on the black market, and it will serve you. And you can delay payments which we can live with, but don't announce it so you won't force us to accept a definition of things that no Treasury official, or economist, can accept.

By the way, Brazil was in default over and over again, they were impossible.

Q: Did you find that the same pressures that you felt are the same imperatives that you were responding to, economically, politically, were working with the other delegates...I'm talking about the major members of the Paris Club?

CONSTABLE: Yes, because while I didn't want to admit it at the time, the major Paris Club countries were represented by their treasury departments. I know we went over this in another tape, when Don Regan took over at Treasury, and sent a message to George Shultz and said, why don't we correct this anomaly that has the State Department doing debt negotiations, it's really Treasury's job. And Shultz said, well, yes, that sounds okay to me. And then we all swung into action and persuaded him not to. I wrote a memo in which I explained that the delegates at the Paris Club came from a variety of departments. Some came from the foreign ministry like me, some came from development agencies, some came from Treasury. I think I came up with a couple of examples. Then I listed them a little disingenuously in some way that jumbled it all up, to demonstrate that it was not an imperative that Treasury be at the table. And then, of course, I made the related argument that the only way we could be at the policy table would be with this hook of being in charge of the Paris Club.

But UK was treasury, France was treasury, Germany was a combination of treasury and their development agency. So the whole operation had a treasury focus, and an economic focus. The British had blind spots, and we would tease them about it. They got very nervous about Nigeria. And Sierra Leone. When we were rescheduling Sierra Leone, I knew nothing about Sierra Leone, and I asked somebody, give me a quick briefing. Well, it's the British Liberia. I understand. The other thing we would do, not terribly serious really, was that when the debtor was in the room as we would go around and ask questions, the French always asked very nice, engaging questions of the Francophone African countries. The British were a little tender with Nigeria and Sierra Leone. But it didn't affect the bottom line. We were a little tender with Brazil, which brings up one story I do have to tell.

After I thought we had taken care of Treasury's effort to take this responsibility away from us, (Treasury never had any complaint about me, or my successor, or his successors. So it has worked very nicely, there was no reason for this) they made another try with Allen Wallis, the Under Secretary, and basically got him to agree that Treasury would co-chair...either chair, or co-chair all of the "important" reschedulings. Well, I went up to Allen, and I said, Allen, this is appalling. You've got to call Beryl and tell him no. And Allen looked a little pained, and he said, what about Brazil? And I said, I'll tell you what, why don't we give them something on Brazil, but then from now on, no. Co-chairs don't work, and State needs to keep this, and it's working fine. And you know, he did it. He picked up the phone and he called the Under Secretary of the Treasury, and he said, I've been thinking about this, and I think it doesn't make sense, and we're not going to do it, but go ahead and co-chair Brazil.

So a banker who had been brought in as a deputy assistant secretary of the Treasury was to co-chair the Brazilian delegation. A very nice fellow. I tried something out on him, and to this day I can't believe that he agreed to it. I said, you know-I don't think I want to say his name, we will let this fellow remain anonymous-why don't we divide it up this way? Why don't you make the presentation when the debtor is in the room, and then I'll take over when they leave. And he said, okay. Well, what that, of course, did was broadcast to the Paris Club that I was in charge, and that he was just there as decoration. He wrote a wonderful speech in which he started by saying, I'd like to welcome all of you to the Paris Club. And I said, I wouldn't do that, the French are in charge, they're the ones welcoming us. That's the only time it happened, and the whole problem then disappeared.

But we were a little delicate when Brazil was in the room, but it didn't affect the bottom line. I didn't always agree with Treasury positions on a lot of things, but I really liked their style. I liked Beryl Sprinkle's style. Once just before the onset of the debt crisis when the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were going to have their annual meeting in Washington we were arguing about the U.S. position. Most of the Fund members wanted an increase in special drawing rights (basically putting more money into the Fund). And we, being the brand new Reagan administration who were going to be tough on all this stuff, didn't want much of an increase. I felt that 50% was about right, as did a lot of other respectable people.(The final increase was about 50%) But some of the Treasury folks, including Sprinkle, were looking at something much smaller. Then there were developing countries that wanted 100%, to double it. You had a range of views. So we were debating this in a small meeting over at Treasury, and Sprinkle said, well, I'd say about 10%. I said, oh, come on Beryl. I said, I say 90%, let's split the difference. Now, Elinor, you know we can't do that. And I said, well, I'll tell you what. Let's just leave numbers out of it altogether. Why don't we use adjectives? And he said, like what? And I said, like moderate. And he said, how about tiny. Everybody around the table was laughing. Tiny, infinitesimal, minute. But there was a camaraderie, and a sense that we were all looking for the same result. That we were responsible. That we would work together. I think in terms of the international economic work I've done, far and away the most satisfying was that period. And I also think...and I wasn't the architect of the overall policy, but I helped with it, and by doing the Paris Club as we did during that period we contributed to defusing the debt crisis. Some of what we did was unstated as policy.

For example, we were worried about liquidity, we were worried about the international financial system, we didn't know where this process that had started in '82 with Mexicans not paying was going to lead. We didn't have quick fixes, and we couldn't get at the fundamentals in the short term. So very quietly and informally we did a list of countries with debt problems, starting with Brazil, the highest exposure. Then you had Mexico, then you had Argentina, then you had a lot of countries in the second tier, countries like Chile, Peru, Ecuador, which were manageable, where we knew we could do reschedulings. Our theory was, if we can take care of all of those...I don't think this has ever been written down anywhere, it never appeared in a policy paper. If we can deal with all of those, then the system could absorb a Mexico plus Argentina, or even a Brazil, and it would be a little bit rocky but there would be enough in place in terms of payments being made, relationships that are operating in a regularized way, countries that are on the way back to being somewhat credit worthy. We could do it. But if Brazil and Argentina came apart, or if Brazil and Mexico came apart, and there were a lot of second tier countries in the process of disintegrating we couldn't have done it. So, it was a real effort to get something in place.

Chile, for example...let's see if we can do Chile and then we'll end. Chile was a different matter. Chile wasn't a Paris Club. Chile was a financial rescue package. And Chile back in 1983, this may have been 1984, was run by an infamous fellow named Pinochet, and we were not very eager to be playing footsie with him although he bothered us perhaps a little less than he might have bothered the Carter administration. But we didn't like him, and there was a lot of pressure from human rights groups not to do anything with Chile, etc., etc. But we were worried. We wanted to keep Chile in the healthy column, and they were headed into a very difficult period. But some of the underlying economics, some of the fundamentals, were okay. The Pinochet economic policy was not too bad actually (like a lot of these wretched third world dictators, they understand some economics, our friend in Singapore being an example. Doesn't think women should work outside the home, so he's not my favorite fellow.) But anyway, Pinochet and his advisors were not too bad in terms of domestic economics but they were headed for trouble, and we needed to put together a package that had infusions from here and there, Ex-Im, World Bank, maybe even a loan guarantee from the World Bank, which George Shultz didn't like. I was furious because this came up prematurely at a meeting on the Seventh Floor, and I knew he wouldn't like it. I wasn't going to raise it with him until we had an idea of whether we had to include it in the package. If we didn't have to, it never had to come up. If we felt we had to, then I wanted to be able to get the arguments together and lay them out in an orderly way. John Whitehead had just come on board as Deputy Secretary, and the ARA fellow who didn't understand this very well, said, we're looking at a package for Chile including World Bank guarantees of some of the debt. Well, that's just a no-no. And the Secretary said, I don't think I like that. And I jumped in and said, Sir, we don't even know if we're going to do it. It's really premature, let us come back to you with a proposal. If we feel this is necessary we'll put it in, if not, we won't. Well, I don't like it, and John Whitehead doesn't like it. And John Whitehead nods and says, yes, I don't like that idea at all. He had just come from his bank in New York. Shultz says, see, he doesn't like it, and I don't like it. And I said, just let us give you a memo. And he said, well, we'll have to think about this very carefully. And I said, yes, that's all I'm asking you to do. And people were going, Elinor, shut up, Elinor be quiet. Anyway, we didn't have to include the guarantee. But we had enough elements in a package to do the trick.

And then we had the human rights question. Now, Elliott Abrams...this must have been '83, I guess, because Elliott, who is notorious for his role when he was assistant secretary for Latin America, had started in the State Department as head of human rights, then he moved to International Organizations, then over to Latin America. He was doing human rights, and he was being fairly aggressive about it. People, I think, were very unfair to Elliott when they said it was like the fox guarding the hen house. Elliott always wanted to do any job that he had as well as he could possibly do it. So I went over to see him, and we had bonded over a different issue a few months earlier, and he said, you're here to lobby me on behalf of Chile. And I said, no, I'm not. I'm here to find out what has to happen. What do you need from us to proceed with this package? Tony Motley and I...Tony was ARA...

Q: Motley replaced...

CONSTABLE: In any case, I said, no I'm not lobbying you, but what do you need? And he thought for a minute, and he said, let's see if Pinochet will lift the state of siege. And I said, okay, and I went back to Tony and I said, Elliott says if we can get Pinochet to lift the state of siege he will approve on behalf of HA this financial package. Tony said he would work Chile, and I would work their ambassador who was a young fellow named Errasuritz, I remember him vividly. He was very effective. And the Chileans agreed. Pinochet agreed to lift the state of siege, and we went ahead with the package. Now, if you look at Chile today, 1996, you're looking at a country with a healthy economy. When Allende took over, and when Chile moved into the column of democracy, it moved into that column with a healthy economy. I think the people like Tony, and the others working on this, should take full credit for that. It's a nice story. And a story which shows how you can get the economics right in the face of overwhelming foreign policy concerns if you're thoughtful and understanding about it.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

CONSTABLE: I thought we were going to finish.

Q: So we're where? I mean you're through with EB now.

CONSTABLE: Yes, I would say pretty much through with EB. We did all sorts of issues, but we can't go over them all.

Q: Where did you go after EB?

CONSTABLE: I went to Kenya as ambassador.

Q: I just want to put at the end, you were in Kenya from when to when?

CONSTABLE: From 1986 to 1989.

I don't really know an awful lot about Gerry. He was very weak analytically apparently, and my deputy told me a lot of stories about him, there's no point in repeating them. Basically to the effect that he was very weak on substance, but he was a good people person. He didn't want to leave and he wanted another post, and he was a little bitter. I think it got directed at me because I was his successor. He knew nothing about me but used to make very hostile comments about me in country team meetings before I arrived, which was not smart because I had friends in the country team, including my friend Steve Sinding. That made it a little bit rough, but nothing insurmountable.

I find it a little hard to talk about being an ambassador because it's a very tough job. It isn't what you expect it to be. It isn't what the public at large thinks it is, glamour and fun, and gadding around. It is excruciatingly hard work. If you're going to be a good ambassador, you have to get involved in a level of detail that really isn't interesting all the time. You have to, in the current Foreign Service, worry about morale, I think much too much. My philosophy about morale, which is very unpopular, is that you carry your own morale around with you, and that you're responsible for it. If there are specific external circumstances that are a serious problem, you bring those to somebody's attention, and you see if there's a reasonable solution. You don't whine all the time. I think part of it is the modern Foreign Service, part of it is Kenya.

Kenya, at the time I was there, was one of those posts about which people have unrealistic expectations. Like Paris. It's supposed to be marvelous. It isn't marvelous. There are health problems. There are security problems. Your work can be interesting, or less interesting. You could end up working for somebody who is unpleasant. I think one of the things that happened, particularly with the support staff and the large regional staff, was that they would arrive in Kenya, they would be less than enchanted, and then they would worry that there was something wrong with them because this was supposed to be paradise, and it wasn't. And then they would focus on remedies that were silly.

The one thing that everyone wanted was a commissary. Now in Kenya we had APOs, everybody knows what APO is. Which means you can send goods in the mail from the United States to Kenya using U.S. postage, and using the military to transport it. And the other thing you had in Kenya was the availability of anything you wanted, the food in Kenya was extraordinary. Kenya was a garden spot then, probably still is.

My predecessor, Gerry Thomas, who was a people person, liked doing nice things for people, refused to open a commissary in Nairobi. His predecessor, Bill Harrop, refused to open a commissary in Nairobi. In fact, Bill Harrop's last words to me as I left were, Elinor, please don't do it. I said, why would I do it? But we reviewed the issue, and I said no. Then people wanted a 10% differential. Now they had applied from Nairobi for a 10% differential the year before and had been turned down by the Department.

Q: You better explain what a 10% differential is.

CONSTABLE: Okay. It's sort of like combat pay.

Q: In other words, in a difficult post.

CONSTABLE: In a really difficult post your salary is augmented by anywhere from 5 to 25%. Are there any 25% posts left?

Q: There might be, Uzbekistan, or something like that.

CONSTABLE: If you're in an isolated and physically dangerous spot, and can't have your family with you, and it's a real ordeal, your pay can be increased by up to 25%. Kenya was a garden spot, Nairobi was delightful. Everybody wanted to come to Nairobi. The idea that we should have hardship pay in Nairobi was laughable in Washington. So I said to the staff, if you can document a deterioration from last year's message, and show that since we applied crime has gotten worse, health has deteriorated, or anything, I'll send it in. They never could. So while I was there I refused to send in a message. Since that time things have deteriorated, particularly security, and Nairobi would qualify for a differential but now, of course, we can't afford it. So morale was a serious problem, and both of my deputies and I worked very hard on that, and that took a lot of time.

I think the A.I.D. director and I were successful in refocusing the A.I.D. program. We coordinated very, very closely. The economic officers in the embassy had been taking a somewhat simple-minded approach with A.I.D., bashing them for being insensitive politically and that sort of thing. And the A.I.D. folks were, by the same token, being a little high handed. It was not a good situation. When Steve Sinding arrived he set about correcting the A.I.D. side. When I arrived I set about correcting the embassy side. I remember a very awkward meeting in my office...I shouldn't have done this but nevertheless, my economic counselor and I, and the A.I.D. mission director, and maybe four or five other people, were talking about an issue where I had a very clear view, and the staff knew what it was. The economic counselor started arguing with the A.I.D. folks, and he said, the embassy's view is, and then articulated something 180 degrees from what I thought. And I looked at him and I said, is that really the embassy's view? And he caught himself, was very embarrassed. And obviously with my predecessor, who didn't know any economics, he could get away with that. We managed to get the A.I.D. mission and the embassy folks working together much more effectively.

Our approach focused on two or three things. First we tried to identify those aid programs that made sense whatever the political environment. And there are some: family planning is one; agricultural research is one; there are some health programs that make sense. What doesn't make sense in a country where there is economic mismanagement is unrestricted balance of payments support. Then in another account we put the economic support funds, and military assistance, which I've always viewed as payment for services rendered, or goods provided, as long as you're getting the goods or service. In Kenya's case it was free access to their ports and airfields if the U.S. military needed that in connection with what was going on in the Gulf. Well, if Kenya provided that we should be willing to pay for it, and we had a limited military assistance program.

Then the next thing we did involved conditionality. When we negotiated an agreement with the government of Kenya we insisted that the terms be implemented. For example, under the health program we would provide money to the government of Kenya to undertake certain activities. When those activities weren't carried out exactly as agreed in the contract, we stopped disbursing immediately. The first time we actually did that was before I even arrived, because the A.I.D. director had consulted with me in Washington. After I arrived one of their ministers, George Saitoti (who later became vice president under Moi), came up to me and said, ambassador, you need to understand that this is a poor country. We don't have money in the budget for this. We can't support this. We're desperate. We really need this money, and I hope you'll agree, and I hope you'll direct your aid colleagues to resume disbursements. I looked him in the eye, and I said, absolutely not. He was quite startled. Diplomats aren't supposed to talk like that. I said, absolutely not. A deal is a deal, and you welshed on your part of the bargain. The deal is off. I think the next week they resumed the activities we had agreed on, and we were able to resume disbursements. We ran every program that way for the three years I was in Kenya. We suspended disbursements three or four times, and by the time the Kenyan government got the message they started conforming to the conditions that were in the agreement. I feel, and still feel very strongly about that. A contract is a contract. It's not some mushy thing.

Q: Very soon it becomes sort of general support.

CONSTABLE: Yes. A bribe is also a bribe, we call them something else as diplomats but there are times when pouring money down a rat hole is necessary for some strategic or political purposes. My only quarrel with our support for, say Zaire or the money we've poured into Honduras to train and arm the Contras during the '80s, my only quarrel was not with the concept, but with the amount of money. We spent too much. We could have gotten Mobutu's support, I think, for a lot less, but I leave that to other experts like my husband.

Q: You mentioned family planning. This is the Reagan administration. Family planning was not high on their list, in fact it was high on their list of what became known as the Christian Coalition. In other words, the more fundamentalist Christians. It meant family planning and abortion, and it meant all sorts of other things. How did you deal with that at this particular time?

CONSTABLE: The real problem was abortion. So as long as you weren't explicitly supporting programs that provided abortion services, you were all right. The other point was, and is, that we put family planning (and I think we continue to do it), in the broader context of maternal and child health. There are fertility determinants that you can work on that are more powerful than the simple provision of commodities. It is possible to create the demand for the commodities which can be provided by somebody else at the end of the day, although we still do some of that.

I remember early in the Reagan administration going to a subcommittee with the Under Secretary of the Treasury, and various other officials, and I was supposed to be there just to be there. Doc Long was chairing the committee, the infamous Doc Long. One of the members of the committee started going after the Treasury Under Secretary, Beryl Sprinkle on family planning, someone who was very supportive. Why is the Reagan administration opposed to it? What is the Reagan administration going to be doing? How? Some hammering. And Beryl didn't have a response. He didn't quite know how to deal with it, so I said, Beryl, I'll take it. Again, when you agree with a policy, or not, if you're at a hearing, you had better defend yourself. And you could make some arguments, not totally persuasive. But anyway, I said to the committee, don't focus exclusively on the provision of commodities, condoms and the rest. There are fertility determinants that are very powerful. For example, education. If you keep a woman in school for six years the odds are much greater that she is going to insist on limiting the size of her family. And then I said, the other powerful fertility determinant is rural electrification. Doc Long said, would the lady like to explain that a little further? And I said, no, I don't think that's necessary. So it is true, if you work on the agenda in a broader context, you can get an awful lot done.

Witness Kenya, which is a dramatic success story in terms of family planning. When we started working in Kenya, not Steve and myself, but our predecessors, Kenya had the highest birth rate in the world in terms of population increase. It was over 4% a year, which is just extraordinary. There has been a dramatic drop both in the birth rate, and in the desired number of children per family unit, which is in some places an even more significant indicator. And its been a success story. So Reagan administration, or no Reagan administration, we were able to do a lot of constructive work in Kenya in that area.

Q: While we're still on the economic side of things, and then we'll move to being a woman ambassador. I've heard stories, I've never dealt in Africa, I never dealt much with an A.I.D. country, but often A.I.D. people will go to a country, particularly an African country where they can do almost whatever they want, and if you send a forestry man, he'll put in trees. If you send a water woman, she'll put in water systems. And the next person who comes around may be something else, another speciality, and that often there really isn't a significant plan for the country, and the follow through. I mean, it's a project and then a new group comes in, and you've got new projects. I'm talking about the American side. Did you run across this?

CONSTABLE: Not while I was there because we were very disciplined. We had a plan. We focused on health, we focused on agriculture. We tried to use the military assistance money as constructively as we could. We were very strict about conditions. This would be of interest to an economist: I was shocked to discover that the IMF in Kenya was much too permissive. The International Monetary Fund has a reputation in Africa of being very tough but I thought that they were very lax in Kenya. The World Bank on the other hand, and this may have been a function of their representative there, understood Kenya a lot better. Kenya was on a long slow slide economically, and it has continued. The health projects and the family planning projects succeeded and we had some small rural loan projects. It's hard to measure their success, but I've always liked economic pluralism as a way to get to political pluralism: if you've created a group of farmers with a vested interest in making the system work for them, you've done something. The overall economy can be sliding, Moi can be slipping into sort of more and more venal and corrupt senility, which I think he probably is, but I don't today think that the money we spent in those areas was wasted.

There were other activities, which you could argue, and I did argue, should be phased out. It would be interesting to see if any Kenyans read this, I hope they don't. I always felt while I was in Kenya that we should have been reducing ESF, Economic Support Funds associated with the military assistance. I didn't fight very hard for them back here, and in fact, I sent a couple of messages to the Department very close hold at the time, that we ought to go for some reductions.

Q: Could you explain what these funds are?

CONSTABLE: How do I explain it in an appropriate way? Crudely, what ESF is, is money over and above what you're providing in military assistance to another country in the form of hardware, and military training, and related goods and services. It started out as a grant, or loan, and it was unrestricted. No conditions. It was really just balance of payments support. I mean, it's a bribe. We want you to be nice to us, we want you to support our objectives in a particular area, here's 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 150 million dollars. We gave enormous amounts of ESF to Egypt and Israel following the Camp David Accords back in the late '70s. We gave, at the time, large amounts of ESF to Mobutu. It has been phased out in some places and the overall numbers have gone down.

Back in...I don't know exactly when this happened, it was certainly by the early '80s, the Hill had decided to look at ESF. Congress gives contradictory, conflicting, and incompatible policy advice to the executive branch where aid is concerned. And a lot of it gets written into law, so it's pretty tough to deal with. On the one hand, ESF is supposed to persuade countries like Zaire or Kenya to cooperate with the United States. But then in the early '80s the Hill decided, well, we better make sure that this money is spent for useful purposes. That sounds like a reasonable idea. But to ensure that that happens you have to apply a second tier of conditionality. Here's 20 million dollars so you'll do what I want you to do. But by the way, you have to spend it exactly the way I tell you to spend it, and if you don't, I'm going to stop giving it to you. It didn't make sense. It would have made more sense, in my view, to lower the ESF amounts and forget about this additional layer of economic conditionality which never worked very well. In Kenya we used ESF for fertilizer imports. And I had to laugh because when I was in Pakistan years before we had terrible problems with fertilizer imports and bagging. And in one of my early country team meetings, everybody knows what a country team is I assume, the A.I.D. director informed me that we had a problem with fertilizer bagging. I burst out laughing and the country team thought I was nuts. I had to explain that Sinding and I had struggled with bagging in Pakistan ten years earlier.

Now, the issue on bagging is as follows: you could bag here and ship the fertilizer abroad. That's terribly expensive. So you ship it, and you bag there. That offers wonderful opportunities for crooked contracts. In Kenya there were several cases. The last one, not long before I left, was the president's cousin who was going to bag the fertilizer for a suitable sum, and of course he wasn't going to do it right...used low quality material, lots of wastage, you name it. Sinding came to my office and he said, Elinor, I think it's the president's cousin. And I said, so what, suspend it. And we suspended ESF. The cousin's contract disappeared quickly.

It was ludicrous. It didn't accomplish anything. We were constantly fighting about it because to ensure that this kind of money is properly spent in a country that is relatively corrupt...Kenya is more corrupt today than it was in 1986. But in 1986 there was an enormous amount of corruption. So to monitor this, is very labor intensive. Either you have to look the other way, and that comes back to haunt you, or you have to really monitor it which creates a lot of political friction.

Q: We've covered more or less the aid side. I do want to talk more about the government, but you mentioned something else, and we might talk about that right now. Being a woman ambassador.

CONSTABLE: Well, it's an issue, not a problem. But it is definitely an issue. I found in most of my career that being a woman is an advantage rather than a disadvantage, once I get my hands on the job. For most of my career being a woman has made it harder to get the job in the first place. I don't think it had anything to do with my going to Kenya because George Shultz liked me, and he didn't care.

When I arrived the staff mostly had never worked for a woman. Most of the country team was male...I'm trying to remember. The deputy was male, econ, admin, political, agency, military, they were all men. They were all white men as a matter of fact. Before I even went to Kenya I had to take care of one little problem. I cannot abide the term "madam". I cannot abide it. To me it conjures up either a woman who runs a bordello, or a woman in white gloves and a fancy hat pouring tea. And it does not correspond with mister. This is one of dilemmas if you're a woman because Mrs. Ambassador doesn't work. Ms Ambassador would be appropriate, but that still sounds silly. Maybe some day it will sound all right but right now it doesn't. So I didn't want to be called Ms Ambassador, and I was fretting about what to do about this, when Ann Miller Morin, who was writing a book about women in the Foreign Service, said you don't have to use madam. I said, I don't? All the women use it. She said, no they haven't all used it, it came into use as a custom because Frances Willis didn't want to be called Miss Ambassador, there was no Ms in those days. So I thought about it, and I decided...I don't know of anyone else who has done this, I urge women to do it, I decided to just drop the madam, and use the military and the British system. Now, you don't refer to a general as Mr. General, or Mrs. or Ms General, or Madam General for that matter. So I simply dropped it and referred to myself as Ambassador, and people got used to it and it worked fine. It took a while, but it worked fine. So I arrived in Kenya, I explained to the country team that they couldn't call me madam, they had to call me Ambassador. Then I said, the way to approach working for a woman was to treat her just like a man, except when we needed to look for a bathroom. Other than that, there is no difference. You don't have to worry about it. Some of them thought that was funny, who knows what they thought.

One of my very first field trips was hysterical. I arrived in November. A little later that month a U.S. carrier arrived in Mombasa. We used to use Mombasa as a liberty port. The Admiral commanding the carrier would always invite the ambassador to come down for a meal, and it was a good thing to do because you could go down, show the flag. I like the Navy, my father was an Admiral in the Navy. It was thrilling the first time I was piped aboard an aircraft carrier. And I could do some work in Mombasa, anyway, it was a good thing to do. So we flew down to Mombasa, we helicoptered out to the deck of the carrier. And then someone decided, again without consulting me, that I shouldn't go down the ladder, it might be too steep. I was wearing flat shoes with cork soles that I always wore on field trips, and they took me down the ramp at the rear end of the helicopter, which unfortunately had a very thin coat of oil, or grease of some kind on it. So I took three steps...it's too bad somebody didn't catch this on film, and my feet went out from under me straight up into the air. I landed on my rear end, and slid half way down. The Admiral and all the flag officers were standing at attention waiting to say hello to me. The look of horror on their faces, which I did see because I did go completely over, and of course several people helped me scramble to my feet, and I got up and turned to my aide and I said, don't you ever take me down a ramp like this again. What's wrong with a ladder? And they never did again. That was just stupid. So I walked across the deck and there was a photographer with me and he said, are you all right? And I said, yes, I'm fine but do not take any pictures of my rear because it was covered with a big oil stain. And there's a photograph of me snarling at the photographer which I have. There were silly things like that.

The only real problem, and it's very hard to articulate this. A number of women have tried, and I don't really think they've succeeded. I think there is a different set of expectations about a woman ambassador with regard to things like morale, family, that sort of thing. Not necessarily about policy, you can get through that. The first agency representative, CIA, which in those days was notorious for not having women in any senior positions, was a good buddy of mine. We were very fond of each other, we had no problem doing business together. The same was true of all of the military personnel who worked for me. The military is very sensitive to chain of command, and therefore work for you.

Q: This is something really an ambassador has over a woman officer somewhere else. Because when you're the ambassador you're the 500 pound gorilla in the American system, and that's it.

CONSTABLE: I think that's right, and the military is very good about that. And I can be fairly tough, and I'm analytically tough. That part wasn't a problem. I do believe, however, that the community at large expected me to be more sympathetic about things like commissaries, housing, and that sort of thing. It's very hard to pin that down because it's very amorphous, and its rather subtle, and I'm not sure people even realize that they're doing this.

Q: I think the term is they expect you to be more nurturing.

CONSTABLE: Yes, and I'm not, and I'm just the opposite if anything. I used to tell people who whined about Nairobi, if you don't like it here why don't you go to Ouagadougou. Do you want to transfer to Somalia? That was not smart, I shouldn't have done that, but that's how I feel about it. I cannot abide whining. So I think that was the only problem.

The Kenyans, of course, didn't know what to make of me. I remember very early on there was a British Kenyan who had grown up in Kenya, or Keenya as he called it, a funny fellow. We don't need to spend a lot of time on this. But the British in Kenya were a wild bunch.

Q: Are you married, or are you from Kenya?

CONSTABLE: Yes, exactly.

Q: I saw the movie White Mistress.

CONSTABLE: It was silly, but it was not inaccurate, and this fellow in his youth had been part of that crowd. But he was now early '60s, and very pompous, and of course my predecessor had been black. I was the first woman to go to Kenya. Of my predecessors, and we started sending ambassadors in the early '60s, all were white men with two exceptions. I was introduced to this fellow, his name was Markham, he was related to the famous Burl Markham. He said, well, a woman ambassador, I suppose they will be sending us an American Indian next. And I hit him. I didn't slap him across the face, I just shoved him very hard. And I laughed, and I said, oh, that's a naughty thing to say. And he couldn't figure out what had happened to him. He just didn't know what had happened to him. My deputy knew exactly what I had done, and he was trying not to smile.

The Kenyans, forget the colonials for a minute, the Kenyans I'm sure expected me to be soft, and sweet and nice. So I would let them believe that when it suited me, or I would get very nasty when it suited me. The president of Kenya and I had a very good relationship, partly because as a woman I could get away with things. I would have private meetings with him, and Moi would say something and I'd lean over and pat him on the knee, and say no, you don't want to do that, now come on. And do things that no man could ever get away with.

I was very fond of Moi. I fervently disapprove of him, and there's a big difference. I think he's a very clever, street smart, politician who like most human beings is very vulnerable to the corruptions that power offers. His cronies have taken full advantage of that, and he has just slipped into a mode...I don't think he's ever going to come out of it frankly.

Q: He's still president.

CONSTABLE: He's still president.

Q: His first name is?

CONSTABLE: Daniel arap Moi. As I say, we had a very good relationship. This may lead us into the political side through the back door. There was a lot of corruption in Kenya and a couple of...

Q: Can we finish up. Are there any other things...

CONSTABLE: Oh, the women thing. As I said, there were many opportunities to take advantage of being a woman. When I first arrived the political section wanted to set up a lunch with me and other key women, and I wouldn't let them do it. They did not understand the point. I said, first I have to establish myself as the ambassador. When I have done that, then we can go back and start doing this sort of thing, but I am not a woman first, I'm an ambassador first, and you better get that through your head. They didn't get that at all. This is less necessary now. My successor was a man, then a black woman, and now a white woman. It is now okay for a woman to be ambassador. But I was the first one. The diplomatic corps had three other women, two from fairly small countries, and the Indian High Commissioner. And the Canadian High Commissioner, who was a man, came up to me when I arrived and said, oh, another lady ambassador. I just looked at him. He said, whoops, I put my foot in it, didn't I? And I said, yes, you did. Then we had a little discussion about what ladies meant. I asked him if he was a gentleman, and we mixed it up.

Then the American Women's...this was a sore point, and I would do the same thing all over again, the American Women's Organization wanted me to be the honorary president. And I said no. I said this was not a professional organization. It is (was then) an organization of spouses, and I am not a spouse. I said, I will come to your events. You can host them at the house, I'll help you out, but it is not appropriate for you to ask me to run the organization, and many people did not like that. But I couldn't do that.

But then as I got myself established as the ambassador, and there was no question about who was in charge, and after having poked Moi in the eyes a couple of times, figuratively, not literally, and some of his ministers, it was very clear they were going to take me seriously. Then I began to cultivate some of the senior women, and became friends with them. And the other thing I began to do as I traveled around the country (more than any of my predecessors, or probably successors), I would talk about women. And I would often start speeches in villages in Kenya with "I understand the women do all the work here." And the women would all smile from ear to ear, and the men would turn to me, oh, that's not right Your Excellency. And I'd say, I don't know, that's what they tell me, that's what I hear. And do a certain amount of that. It was very touching, rural farm women would come up to me and say how excited they were to see a woman ambassador. And boy, that was just wonderful.

Q: Did you have any women officers? And were you finding this a new breed. I'm talking about at lower ranks, but women coming through into the Foreign Service in greater numbers. Did you find them a new breed? Or how did they relate to you?

CONSTABLE: Yes, and I tried to recruit women. It wasn't easy because there wasn't a very large pool. I tried to recruit a woman economic counselor, and actually offered the job to a woman who turned me down. Did have a woman political counselor who I think had a hard time. She was part of a tandem couple, and there was no work for her spouse, and it became difficult for them. I don't think she had any professional difficulties because she was a woman. Then we had a junior political officer who was a woman, and who in my estimation was practically the strongest officer on the whole staff. She was just terrific. There were several women in the A.I.D. mission including Steve Sinding's wife, Monica Knorr, who is a friend of mine, who had a senior job with A.I.D., and I thought she was the strongest person on the regional side. But it was scattered, and there weren't very many women on the staff.

Q: Could you tell me about dealing with the government of Kenya?

CONSTABLE: Kenyans are a rough bunch. Charming, smart, a bunch of rogues, sort of like the Nigerians in West Africa. Half the ministers I had to deal with were corrupt, or more. I can think of a number of colorful incidents to illustrate that.

Q: Let's have a few.

CONSTABLE: All right. Let's start with the then finance minister, George Saitoti. We had a case involving an American insurance company that had a subsidiary in Kenya. The Kenyans decided they wanted to Kenyanize the insurance industry. This is typical third world nonsense. The U.S. subsidiary had to convert in some way to majority Kenya ownership. They agreed to do that under a deal that would have had Kenya pay them for some of their assets. At the last minute the Kenyans reneged on the deal. The Americans didn't have enough documentation. Frankly, my view was that the American company had cut a very sweet deal with the Kenyans, and thus didn't want embassy help. In any case, folks who were doing the negotiating suddenly ran into difficulties, and the thing ran into the ground, and then they came to me for help. On the board of directors of the bank that was going to control the new insurance company was one George Saitoti, the finance minister. So I went to Saitoti, and I said, look, I don't care how you take care of this, but take care of it. Don't let it just sit like this, it looks bad for you, it's not fair to the company. I don't want to get in between you and the company and dictate the terms of the deal, but finish the negotiations, do it reasonably, and move on. Oh, ambassador, oh yes of course, we will do this. I've just learned about it myself. That was a lie. He had been in the adjoining room dictating the terms throughout the negotiation. He had made the decision to renege on the deal because he decided he wasn't getting enough money out of it. This sort of thing that happened all the time. He dragged his feet. The thing did not get resolved, and it came to the Commerce Secretary's attention. He generated a letter that they wanted me to deliver to the president which accused Kenyans of mishandling this, of being corrupt, and did name the finance minister as somebody who was behaving badly.

Instead of delivering the letter, I took it in to George Saitoti, and I said, look, this is getting out of hand. You have got to take care of this. Look what people are saying about you, and I showed him the letter, and then I took it away from him. And he was apoplectic that anyone would dare call him corrupt. And I said, I didn't call you corrupt. I'm not saying you're corrupt, but if you don't get this sorted out soon, more and more people are going to be making this charge.

You never knew for sure how much they knew that you knew. But it was assumed that you knew something. The Kenyan system is modeled after the British system, and they have what they call Permanent Secretaries, the chief civil servant who works effectively as the minister's deputy. The Permanent Secretary in the finance ministry was a fellow by the name of Charles M'Bindyo, a very charming rogue. My A.I.D. director came to me and said M'Bindyo is on the take. And I said, well that's probably a good thing. He said, what? I said, if he were scrupulously honest, he wouldn't be able to do business with the president, or the finance minister, or anybody else, and we wouldn't be able to work with him. He would be isolated and cut off and marginalized. But Charles was trying to persuade me to persuade American companies to invest in Kenya. This was one of Moi's themes. Companies were leaving South Africa. We had finally done the stupid thing and imposed sanctions, and were giving U.S. companies an excuse to get out. A lot of them were just waiting for an excuse. Moi said to George Shultz when he came in January of '87, and to me repeatedly, can't you get these companies to invest in Kenya? And I said no. But ambassador...I said, you have to get them to invest in Kenya. If Kenya is a good place to invest, they will see it, they will come. Right now it isn't, and right now quite honestly I cannot recommend that a single dollar of U.S. investment come into this country. Well that didn't go down too well. So they would say, how can we get it together? I asked the Permanent Secretary if it would help if I put together a list of all of the problems that current investors are facing. These stories are getting back to other companies, which is why they aren't coming. And he said, yes, that would be good. So I had my folks draw up a three page list, cleaned it up, and on some of the more difficult cases I checked with the companies to see how much of the story they would let me tell, etc. And I went back to Charles with three pages, and I put it on plain white bond, no American embassy, no nothing. And I said, you can do anything you want with this. Here it is. And we started going through some of them. I mean they were absurd.

Flowers are a big business in Kenya, and a lot of the flowers that you see in Europe come from Kenya. A company in the northern part of the country did all its business by short-wave radio because, again, it's so much of the third world, there's no infrastructure, the phones don't work, the mails at snail's pace, etc. Nowadays, presumably, they use E-mail but they didn't have it then. The government took their radios away because it decided that somebody was using them to stir up political opposition to Moi. Well, that wasn't happening. Even if it had been happening, taking the radios away from the company wasn't going to solve the problem, they could just go someplace else. And I went in and tried three times to solve that, and couldn't get the radios back for them.

Charles looked through three pages of the list, and he said, well, ambassador...Your Excellency he called me, you left something off the list. And I said, what's that Charles? And he said, corruption. And I said, Charles, that's at the top of the list, but if you think I'm going to put it down in black and white, you're crazy. But you know it's a problem. I know it's a problem. And then we had a long discussion about corruption. And I told Charles, and this is somewhat delicate, and I never put this in writing. I said, you need to think about your economy. Think of it like a cake or a pie, and what you want to do is you want to take a small sliver out of that cake, put it in your pocket. But you want to keep the size of the piece constant. And you want to keep the pie growing, the percentage size constant, keep the pie growing. That way the economy grows, and you get more money. But what you guys are doing is, you started out with an eighth of the pie, you move it up to a quarter of the pie, one of these days you're going to be up to a third of the pie, and two-thirds of that is not enough to keep your economy going, and you are strangling economic activity in this country. So redesign your rip-offs, do it the way Kenyatta did it. Kenyatta, Moi's predecessor, was the famous Mau-Mau freedom fighter who became the first president of Kenya in 1962. Under Kenyatta, who was corrupt, the deals were struck, and then a little bit was skimmed off the top. So you could have a viable economic or commercial activity that could function on its own merits, and the payoffs were taken out of the profits. Under Moi the payoffs are riddled all the way through the deal. So by the time you get finished with them, the deal was uneconomic. And this process was proliferating, and as far as I can tell hasn't really slowed down. This is why Kenya is sinking.

The minister for local Industries, a very funny guy actually, was one of the few Maisi in the cabinet. After he was appointed I went to call on him, and we had a grand time together telling jokes to each other. The next day there was a picture on the front page of all the papers of the American ambassador and this new minister laughing uproariously, both of us had our mouths wide open, and everybody thought that was wonderful. But he was corrupt as the day is long.

And finally there was the security fellow, Oyugi, who was not of cabinet rank, but was in charge of domestic security, and other activities for Moi, who created all kinds of problems for us. I went to see him one day to see if I could connect in some way, and I took my political counselor with me. We spent about an hour with each other, and had a delightful meeting where we said marvelous things to each other, small talk, talk about Kenya, and that sort of thing. And afterwards the political counselor who sometimes could be a little bit naive, said, gee ambassador, that was a really good meeting. I said, not here. I didn't even like to talk in the car although I trusted my driver implicitly. I didn't like to talk in the elevator in the embassy. I said, come back to my office. We went back to the embassy and we went up to my office, and I turned to her, and I said, Judy, you have to understand that man was lying through his teeth for one solid hour. He was? I said, of course, he was. So corruption was a feature.

There were a lot of other reasons for the relationship to deteriorate.

Q: With the United States you mean.

CONSTABLE: Between the United States and Kenya. I think, under the circumstances, we kept going pretty well. But aid levels were declining. Military assistance was going down. The ESF was going down, and I would go in every year and I'd say, hey, good news, they only cut us by a third, instead of a half.

There were also growing internal political tensions. When Moi took over in '78 there was enough money for both walking around money, and economic growth. He could take care of his friends without interfering with basic economic activity. As the number of his "friends" grew, he began to crowd out legitimate economic activity with some of these corrupt payments. But our aid levels were going down, and at the same time we were paying more attention to Kenya's human rights record which was odd because it was a Republican administration, and the Democrats are supposedly the ones that are more militant about human rights around the world. I'm not quite sure why attention was focused on Kenya. But things were deteriorating dramatically. The particular event that triggered the slide was the arrest of a famous Kenyan lawyer by the name of Gibson Kamau Kuria, and it's a fascinating story.

Moi was getting ready to pay a working visit to Washington, and I was trying to prepare the Kenyans. At the same time, this would have been February of 1987, the then Washington Post correspondent, Blaine Harden, was working on a human rights story. He hadn't published anything yet. I heard that he was doing this. I'd never met the guy, so I invited him over to the residence. I said, what do you like to drink, and he paused. And I said, I'm going to have a martini...I still drank martinis in those days. He said, oh, that would be good. So we sat out on the veranda, and had several martinis. I think we probably both got a little sloshed, I'm not sure. And I said, Blaine, I want to ask you to do three things for me. He looked at me very warily. I said, I want you to give me a heads-up before you file. I want you to give the government an opportunity to tell its side of the story if they are willing to do it. And I want you to be very precise in your story about the difference between allegations and facts that have been proven. He looked at me and said, done. I think he expected me to want to stifle the article.

And then he explained that Gibson had been working with clients who were allegedly political prisoners. They probably were, but I still feel the need to be careful about my terms. Gibson was being threatened by the government. Blaine said that if Gibson was arrested he planned to file his story.

We'd had another incident late the previous year in which Howard Wolpe had come to town and stirred things up.

Q: Howard Wolpe being?

CONSTABLE: Howard Wolpe was then the Democratic congressman from Michigan and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for Africa. Howard had a staffer by the name of Steve Weisman who was very militant on the issue of human rights, and didn't like the Foreign Service much, and particularly disliked ambassadors. He had had a huge run-in with my husband a few years earlier in Zaire. We're not talking about Zaire, but I can tell that story in 60 seconds.

A congressional delegation had gone to Zaire. Mobutu was trying to be on his good behavior because he needed a little more money. Peter was there, I was in Washington doing economic stuff. I had gotten Zaire into the IMF program, and got their debt rescheduled. So we were trying to manage everything and Mobutu was on his good behavior and had released a bunch of prisoners from jail. The CODEL wanted to meet with the prisoners, and Mobutu was very nervous about this but the government said okay, one by one. No, we're going to meet them as a group. Okay, but don't wear coats and ties (in Zaire, like Mao's China, clothes were a political statement. Mobutu decreed Mao collars rather than coats and ties for the modern Zaire). They met them as a group, they wore coats and ties to be provocative. After the meeting, which was in a downtown hotel, the parliamentarians went out to the back parking lot to get into their respective cars, whereupon they were set upon by a bunch of goons and beaten to a bloody pulp. Mickey Leland, a Democratic congressman from Texas, who since then was killed in an air crash in Sudan, was part of the CODEL and watched all this out of hotel window, and reported back to Howard. Howard then said he wouldn't meet with Mobutu. Peter was trying to get them to meet and they finally negotiated a meeting on a yacht provided the yacht didn't weigh anchor, and no food was served. Well, as soon as they got on board, Mobutu had them weigh anchor. There was one whole deck devoted to food. The congressmen wouldn't eat it. Peter couldn't eat it, it was hot, for seven hours they floated up and down the Zaire River shouting at each other. Peter wrote to me about it and said it was the worst week of his life.

Howard Wolpe arrived in Kenya without a CODEL, but with some staffers including Steve Weisman. He had been in Zambia at some sort of a regional meeting of African officials, and then he came to Kenya where he had asked for a series of meetings that were a little impractical. He wanted to meet every minister. He wanted to meet some ministers in groups. So we worked out the best schedule we could. He wanted to meet all the human rights activists in Kenya. Shortly before he arrived, the Kenyan chief of protocol called me at home. He had a drinking problem, and by the end of the day he was usually in very bad shape, and he was pretty drunk when he called. He said, ambassador, we don't like this visit. I said, that's too bad, he's coming, what's your problem? Well, we don't like it. And I said, don't be ridiculous. And of course he was drunk, I knew I couldn't reason with him. So when I got off the phone I called my deputy, I told him to drive over to the Permanent Secretary of the foreign ministry's house, he was a friend of sorts, to warn him that Gideon was having a problem, and to make sure that things were still okay. They weren't okay, they were beginning to unravel. The government had decided that Howard Wolpe was not going to meet with Wangari Mathai, who is a world famous environmentalist. That he was not going to meet with Timothy Njoya, who was a Kenyan priest, active in human rights. The first meeting Wolpe had scheduled was with Njoya, and security guards came and prevented Wolpe from going into the guy's house, which was real smart of the Kenyans, real smart.

To go back to Wolpe's arrival, he had come to the embassy for the obligatory country team briefing, and he opened the meeting by looking at me, and saying...and he and I had met before, and saying, I have to start with bad news. Someone in your embassy is sabotaging my visit. I said, I find that hard to believe. Your visit has been handled personally by me, my immediate deputy, and the political counselor. Are you accusing us of sabotaging you? Whereupon Weisman hissed we have proof. And I said, I think you better share it with me then. We can't. Well, I think we better drop it then. Well, you better look into it. I said, I'm not looking into it unless you tell me the details. I was this close, one millimeter...how do I define it orally, getting up and walking out and saying this meeting is over.

Wolpe changed the subject and we started briefing him on human rights. By this point I was furious. They started asking about a Kenyan who was in jail, and he said, what about this fellow, and he mispronounced the name. He had the first name wrong, and he mispronounced the last name, and I said, I never heard of him. He kept saying, yes, he's in jail, and he's this and he's that. I said, I don't know who you're talking about, I never heard of him. I knew who he was talking about, of course. I let him go on for a while and I said, oh, you must mean Professor so-and-so. Well, yes. Okay, I'm sorry you were giving me a different name, and you were confusing me. Weisman knew what I was doing. And at one point in this meeting he hissed at Howard. Steve loved to hiss. "She's worse than her husband". I liked that.

In any case, when the meeting broke up late Friday night, they went back to their hotel. My then deputy and I went back to my office, and I said, what is this about? George Trail, who later became ambassador to Malawi, said, I don't know but I have a theory. Wolpe was just in Lusaka. Mwangale, the then foreign minister of Kenya was also in Lusaka. He was anti-American and a trouble maker. Very charming to me all the time, but for some reason he didn't like the United States. So I called the ambassador in Lusaka, and I said, let me ask you something. Did Mwangale and Wolpe have a conversation? And he said, yes they did. I said, was it interesting? He said, it was very interesting. I was there, one of my guys was there, would you like a verbatim transcript? And I said, that would be very nice. He said, I'll just send it up open channel so nobody will even notice, no cable traffic or anything. So first thing the next morning we got the transcript, and it went like this. Mwangale to Wolpe, why is the American embassy sabotaging your visit? Wolpe to Mwangale, I don't know. They're just a bunch of Reaganites up there, they hate me. Mwangale to Wolpe, well, I just don't understand it, they sure are trying to mess up your visit. Then they laugh. Then they talk about some other stuff.

The next day I had to have Wolpe over to lunch, and before lunch started, I said, come into the living room. We stood next to the piano...if I ever write a short story about all this, we need the piano in the background. I said, now listen Howard, I want you to stop this business about the sabotaging. He said, no. I want you to look into it. And if you don't look into it there's going to be a huge problem. I said, I'm not looking into it. Unless you tell me where you got it, what the basis of the charge is. And he said, I can't do that. I said, I really don't understand how you could take what a guy like Mwangale would say to you at face value. Howard's eyes got big, how does she know it's Mwangale? And I said, it didn't take me long to figure it out, and it's not true and we're going to drop it. He was very conflicted. Weisman was obviously really pushing this.

So we went out, we had a perfectly nice lunch. And at that point I peeled off and told my political counselor, you stick with this guy like glue. I'm not speaking to him again. Howard then set out trying to have these meetings that kept getting cancelled, and it was just a disaster. And I told the Kenyans, you guys are really being stupid about this. I didn't talk to Moi that way, but I did talk to Kenyans that way. In the meantime I called my friend at the foreign ministry, and I said...I never put any of this in a cable because I thought it was too messy, but I told Chet Crocker all of it afterwards. I said, you know, there's a very strange story circulating that I thought you ought to know about. Somebody claims that your foreign minister is the one who told Howard Wolpe that we're trying to sabotage things. I said, you know it isn't true, and I know it isn't true, but I have to tell you, do you know where that could be coming from? Well, this fellow, knew perfectly well where it was coming from. He knew Mwangale had done it. Then I don't know exactly what happened, but Moi pulled Mwangale back from Lusaka where the meeting was still going on, and apparently read the riot act to him.

Mwangale then asked to have lunch with Wolpe, and of course my political counselor was right at his heels, and they met for lunch by the pool at the Intercontinental Hotel. And Mwangale starts, listen I never said anything to you about the embassy sabotaging your visit. And Howard said, you did too. It was right by the shrimp, we were standing right by the shrimp. Mwangale kept saying, I never said, I never said it. Well, of course, at this point poor Howard realized that he's been had, and he tries to reach me, and I won't talk to him.

And finally the next night, as he's getting ready to leave, he's at the airport departure lounge, I get this plea from one of his staffers. Would I come out and please speak to him. And I said, okay. So I drove out to the airport, went into the departure lounge, and Howard Wolpe looks me in the eye, and in front of Steve Weisman and his whole staff, he says, ambassador, I apologize to you. And I said, I accept the apology. Steve was furious. And from then on Howard Wolpe and I were fast friends. I would go to see him every time I came to Washington. Steve started in and he said, now ambassador you have to admit that we haven't done anything about human rights in Kenya. I said, I don't have to admit anything. I just got here, let me take a look at it. Well, you have to admit...Wolpe turned to him and said, just shut up Steve.

Q: Where was Steve Weisman coming from, do you know?

CONSTABLE: The only information I have comes from Zaire where he spent some time many years ago as a student. He was thrown out of the country by Mobutu because he was talking about, or writing about, political and economic corruption in Zaire. And he was very bitter about it. I mean, this motivates a lot of congressional staffers, which I think is unfortunate.

Q: It is. I think this is one of the unfortunate things is that you do have this internal commitment of many people on the staff using congress for their own purposes, and often it gets into legislation, it corrupts the whole system. If we see it from the foreign affairs, I'm sure it's in other elements too.

CONSTABLE: Anyway, I told Howard, I said, listen Howard for heaven's sake I'm a Democrat. I'm a career Foreign Service officer and an ambassador. But my human rights agenda is not that far from yours. I would come to see him in Washington and we would talk about all of this. I did work more actively, not as actively as Weisman would have liked, or as Dick Shifter, who was the HA Assistant Secretary, would have liked. In fact, I tore up the first human rights report in front of the foreign affairs secretary. I told HA I would do this. Washington refused to make a distinction between allegations and facts, and listed allegations as facts. I said, you must specify that this is an allegation, that we haven't proven it yet. Yes, but we've concluded. And I said, no you haven't. You don't know, and you don't have enough information. I said, if you leave that in I'm disowning the report. They left it in, I took it out. Shifter and I worked well together later. The next time around, oddly enough, I thought the HA report was too soft and I would have strengthened it.

Then there was the Blaine Harden article. The article was published on the front page of The Washington Post underneath a picture of Moi and Reagan, with me in the background. Moi came to town in March, 1986, we had a series of uneventful meetings. Uneventful except for the lunch where we were in the middle of a discussion about I don't know what. Reagan looked at the ceiling, and said, I wonder what it would be like to be up there in a space ship looking down. I wonder what we would think? And the Kenyans looked him as if he were nuts, but his staff was obviously used to this, and they brought the discussion back around.

Peter was in town on business. We were staying at a local hotel. The next morning we got up, he comes back with a paper, and he said, oh, here's a picture of you, and Moi, and Reagan on the front page, right under a headline about torturing in Kenya. I said, that's not funny. And he said, I'm not joking, and he hands me the paper, and there it is. Blaine had given me the promised heads-up, and I knew it was coming. I didn't expect the Post to play with it. And from then on it was rough. I worked with the Kenyans, and worked with the Kenyans, and of course the article had been precipitated by the fact that the Kenyans threw Gibson in jail. I finally got him out, privately, not publicly, but behind the scenes I just hammered the Kenyans. I said, you've just got to let this guy out, got to let him out, got to let him out. In one meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the foreign ministry, there were a couple of other people in the room and I said, look, for heaven's sake why don't you let Gibson out on Jamhuri day which is their national day. And he looked at me and he said, if you don't stop pressuring us, I don't know whether he'll ever get out. And I said, did I say anything. Did anyone here hear me say a word about Gibson. He laughed, and sure enough they let him out.

Shortly before I left Kenya, Ethel and then Kerry Kennedy came to Kenya to present a medal to Gibson. It was the first time I've ever felt like a real celebrity. I went to the church where Gibson was getting the medal, and I sat right behind him. I always wore a hat in Kenya because I had an eye problem and had to shade my eyes. So everybody could see me, and I leaned forward to say something to Gibson and every photographer in the room sprinted to the front of this church, and flashed God knows how many photographs, some of which appeared in the press.

I would have given their human rights record C, maybe C minus, and it was getting worse. But it wasn't nearly as bad as Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Zaire, half the other countries in Africa. Moi used to ask me, why so much attention to Kenya. And I said, because we hold you to a higher standard, you have a better record. He said, yes, but I don't kill people. Kenyatta killed the two politicians that were the most threatening to him. Tom Mboya, whom everybody has heard of, and another fellow by the name of Kariuki, were killed. It's just assumed by everybody that these were political assassinations. It's hard to prove. And there had not been any assassinations under Moi, and he felt that was a terribly important distinction.

My own feeling was that we were tilting at a windmill. We could work on cases. You could get somebody out of jail. You could focus attention on someone who was in jail, and probably get better treatment for them than they would otherwise get. But it was the institutional erosion that was the problem. The judiciary had started out as an independent judiciary, and it was slowly losing its independence.

Q: Did you have a feeling at that time that the situation was going down economically, politically, etc.

CONSTABLE: Definitely. We had no leverage because our aid was declining. The only leverage we had, if any, was the court of public opinion. We did have influence. I think we used that fairly effectively, but it was my sense, as I said in my farewell message when I left in the fall of '89, that Kenya was in a long slow political and economic decline. That there was very little we could do about it. That we should distance ourselves somewhat from the government, but not try to influence events too directly. And, of course, the policy we followed since I left was just the opposite. We cut off all aid. We persuaded other donors to cut off aid unless Moi agreed to have multiparty elections. Well, he's not stupid. He said, sure. He knows the opposition is divided and ineffective. He knows that he can play around and rig just enough of this without being too blatant about it, so that he'll get reelected. He was reelected by an overwhelming majority. Now what do we do?

My successor lobbied publicly on behalf of the opposition. That's a long story.

Q: Was your successor a career Foreign Service person?

CONSTABLE: No, Smith Hempstone, a political appointee. I need to back track and talk about my departure. I mentioned that a lot of Moi's ministers were corrupt. There were a couple of other incidents that are worth recalling. One didn't involve economic corruption, but was messy. We had a radio system, dependent on antennae for relaying signals. I don't know whether it still does, and I don't think that part of the story is classified, the location might be so I won't mention it. I got a call one night that the antennae were being ripped out. So I set some things in motion, told people to try and figure out what was going on, and who was doing it. Traced it back to the security guy I mentioned earlier, but at the same time I called the president's special assistant, and I said, this is Ambassador Constable, our communications network has just been destroyed by your people, and I want immediate round-the-clock police protection. I want five guards posted at my residence. I want a police contingent surrounding the embassy. I want guards at my deputy's residence. I want a vehicle assigned to me with police in the vehicle 24 hours a day. I want...and I was going on and on like this. He said, but wait. And I said, I'm sorry but I have no way to communicate in an emergency now. So we're just going to have to use a different...but, but ambassador. No buts, get me those folks. I want them now. I want to see them on my front doorstep in the next ten minutes. They put the antennae back up. I'm not sure the president knew what was going on. We used a little blackmail which I still can't talk about, in addition to my yelling. But it was a nasty incident.

Q: What was the motivation?

CONSTABLE: The motivation was to make trouble for us. To flex muscles. We hadn't received permission to put them up in the first place. It was one of these look the other way things. They had gone up well before I got there. And there was a fair amount of that. And this fellow just decided we'll have a little fun at their expense.

The other incident that I might mention involved the kidnaping of a retired American judge, the chairman of the board of the Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights in this country, a very distinguished fellow. He had asked the Kenyans for a visa to come to Kenya to observe a trial, and the Kenyans didn't want to give it to him. I persuaded them to do it. I said, look, you are always saying that you have a fair and open system, that you don't have a human rights problem. What better publicity could you have than to have a distinguished American jurist come to Kenya, observe your due process in action. I talked them into it, they gave him a visa-Marvin Frankel was his name. He showed up on a Tuesday (he and I were going to meet on Wednesday) and he went straight to the court room. My junior political officer was there with him. I was in my office, the political officer came rushing in breathless, ambassador, the judge has disappeared. What? The judge has disappeared. He was sitting there, I was sitting there, I was watching the trial, I turned around and he was gone. He was very upset. I said, calm down Jerry. He's just disappeared. I said, do you have any idea what might have happened. And he said, none. He talked to people at the scene, and they reported seeing a couple of goons come in, and he said the judge walked out with them. He'd been kidnaped.

Q: In a court.

CONSTABLE: In full view of everyone in a court room, and he had been carted off to a place called Nyayo House, which is a building in downtown Kenya where political prisoners were allegedly tortured. I never knew for sure. It was plausible, it was a plausible accusation.

There was an event that had preceded this which had some bearing on it. We had some missionaries in western Kenya who were being thrown out of the country. The government of Kenya was, for reasons that nobody understood, refusing to renew work permits or visas for a group of missionaries in western Kenya. A couple of the missionaries had been a little bit rough and controversial, but it seemed like a disproportionate response, and we were in the process of trying to sort it out, and I was trying to make sure that they weren't physically mistreated in any way. The government had a perfect right not to have them there, but it seemed stupid. And again, all these things seemed to happen on a late Friday afternoon. The same political officer who reported Frankel's disappearance came in and he said, I think I may have figured out what's going on, and he handed me a letter. The letter was from one of the missionaries to a minister in North Carolina, and it reported on the success that he and his colleagues were having in overthrowing Moi. It went on to say that no large country should be run by a black man. There were references to the Ku Klux Klan as being involved in this plot to overthrow Moi, and various other silly things. The letter was clearly a forgery.

So I called the foreign ministry Permanent Secretary at home, and I said, listen, you better know this letter is a forgery. If you're throwing the missionaries out because of this letter, then think again, because somebody is messing around here. I got a vague reply. The next morning at home I got the three local papers and all of them...I still have them, had two and a half inch high banner headlines across the front page. Ku Klux Klan plot to overthrow Moi foiled. It printed the text of the letter, and it then reported that the missionaries were being deported. Well, I picked up the phone and I called my friend at the foreign ministry and I really let him have it. I think he never forgave me for this because I swore at him, and he didn't like that. I said, I don't give a damn what you guys publish in your stupid newspapers. But if you touch one American citizen, it's war. I will pull out the stops here. You will be so sorry. Calm down, calm down. No, I won't calm down. This is outrageous, this is inflammatory. You are nuts, it's a forgery. No, please stop ambassador. No, I won't stop. I'm telling you right now. Within an hour Moi was out on the hustings, and he made a speech, and he said, do not hurt any American missionaries. There may be a few bad apples, but most of these missionaries are wonderful people, and we love having them in Kenya. And there were no incidents. Nobody was hurt. That was the end of that incident.

And then I tried to get to Moi, but nobody wanted me to talk to him. Everybody, I think, was a little embarrassed. The missionaries went home. There were a couple of articles, and then it all stopped. I kept trying to get to Moi. Finally I talked to my friend, Kiplagat, and I said, look, if I don't talk to him about the missionaries, can I meet with him? We met, we started chit-chatting a little bit, and I said, I wish you'd do me a favor. If you think you have a problem, I wish you'd call me. Kiplagat started getting a little bit nervous, and I said, just promise me that if you think something is going wrong, call me. And Moi said he would. And then I said to him, you know you're right about the KKK. I could see Kiplagat was ready to jump across the room and throttle me. And I said, they'd love to overthrow you. The Klan thinks it's an outrage that a black man as powerful as you runs a country like this. Where is she going to take this? And I said, but you have to understand something. The Klan is bankrupt. They don't have enough money for an airplane ticket. They can't get over here. They can't do anything to you. And we started laughing about it. Afterwards Kiplagat said, you promised. And I said, just missionaries, just missionaries. I didn't say I wouldn't talk about the Klan. So we put that behind us.

But then not long after that they kidnaped Frankel. Now, what to do? My political counselor started getting hysterical, wanted me to call Moi. And I said, no, not yet. I want to know where he is first. I didn't want the Kenyans to hurt him. We had enough contacts in the Kenyan police and intelligence and military, so I figured we'd be able to do that pretty fast. We found him, I've forgotten who got the information, but we found him very quickly. He had been taken first to a local jail, and just thrown into a jail cell. They took his shoe laces away, his tie, his belt, and dumped him in with some common...we don't know if they were criminals or not, but they were in the cell with him. Then they moved him to the Nyayo House and started interrogating him, among other things about the Ku Klux Klan, and they wanted to know why he had come to Kenya. I just came to see a trial. Yes, but why? Who sent you? They were getting almost paranoid about this.

When I found out where he was, I sent my chief of the consular section over to Nyayo House to find him. They didn't want to let him in, and he said, I'm here for the American ambassador, and I'm here to find the judge. While he was trying to get in, he saw someone at the end of the corridor, and he shouted, are you Judge Frankel? And Frankel said, yes. And he said, I'm here to rescue you. At that point I did call Moi, he wasn't there but I talked to his personal assistant, and I said, you have Judge Marvin Frankel detained at the Nyayo House. He's a distinguished American jurist. This is a scandal. You release him immediately. He also has a serious heart condition, and if you don't let him out of there immediately, he could die. That was a lie but that sometimes gets to them. He was released in 15 minutes. We took him straight to the airport, and put him on the next plane. He said, I want to get out of this country. I don't ever want to see it again. Of course, that was marvelous publicity for Kenya. It was idiotic.

Moi claimed that he knew nothing about it, that this was the work of this security fellow. And that when he found out about it, he was horrified, and he'd released him immediately. I had no basis for contradicting him except to point out that there was a climate that existed in Nairobi.

Q: I take it Moi had pretty close control. Did the security man have his own base, or was he Moi's man?

CONSTABLE: He was Moi's man but he often did things that Moi wouldn't have done. I interpreted the fact that he was released in 15 minutes as evidence that Moi didn't know about it. If Moi had issued the order his staff would have been terrified of going in and telling him he was wrong. They were scared to death of him. And the fact that it happened so quickly, I think probably meant that he didn't know that the man had actually been taken to the Nyayo House, and was in detention. Anyway, Frankel went straight to the airport and got on a plane, and we then corresponded for a while. He wrote me a letter and said, I'm sure you'll understand that I don't ever want to come to Kenya again. I wrote back, and didn't clear it with anybody, and said that I thought his behavior under these trying circumstances was classy. He's a wonderful man, and it was just idiotic.

But I interpreted these events as evidence that on the political side things were deteriorating. That the relationship was fragile. That Moi was not always in complete control. And when I left I had an excellent interview with him. My predecessor, Gerry Thomas, had had a meeting with him before he left, but never reported anything about it, which frustrated the DCM because these can be interesting meetings. I came back and I said, I'll tell you why Gerry didn't report anything. It's not a meeting, it's a photo op. While we were having our picture taken, and there were three ambassadors being rotated in this little photo op, Moi was just about 6'4" and I'm 6', and I leaned over, I didn't move my lips, and said, I've got to see you. 8:00 tomorrow? And he said, done.

So I came back the next morning and we had a long talk. And in that talk I told him that I was leaving, and I was sorry, I was fond of Kenya but I was very worried about Kenya because too many of his close associates were corrupt. I had never put it that boldly to him. I mentioned to him particularly the energy minister who was the worst, and the security fellow. I said, you need to know that we know. I'm sure you assumed that we know. We know where their money is. We know when they get it. We know how much they get. We know where they take it. We know what the deals are. We know all of it. And it's getting worse, and you've just got to stop it. It's leading Kenya down the garden path. And he said, oh, my political opponents tell you all of this. And I said, no, that's not what it is. It's true, and you know it's true. Then we said a cordial goodbye. He was livid. I think he would have PNGed me on the spot if I hadn't been on my way out of the country. He sent instructions to the embassy in Washington to not have any communication with me.

In Kenya itself the word was out that I was off, that my successor was going to be marvelous, and of course Smith Hempstone rode in to great welcome. Nobody knew about my meeting since it was classified. People wondered why the government was so welcoming to Smith Hempstone. Nobody knew anything about him. So Smith started out very well, but then his access to Moi started diminishing. He got mad at Moi about something or other, bad mouthed him in public. Moi then cut him off completely. He then decided that he liked the opposition, and in a very unprofessional way, I think, publicly supported them. That's another story which we don't have time for here.

Q: Before we leave Kenya, could you talk about the security situation as it impinged on the embassy?

CONSTABLE: You mean in terms of personal security?

Q: Personal security.

CONSTABLE: I didn't think there was much of a problem. We were a low threat post. We were a medium threat for purposes of ordinary crime.

Q: That's what I was really thinking about.

CONSTABLE: It's much worse now.

Q: I've heard that it really is not a very pleasant place to be.

CONSTABLE: No, it's awful. And now it would qualify as a hardship post because of the crime. It's just terrible. You can't walk anywhere in Nairobi, you get mugged. When I was there, there was some problem with crime. It was manageable, we had a guard system. I was fairly careful. I think you have a responsibility as an ambassador not to put yourself at risk. I think people who, oh, they're going to be a hero, and they're not going to have their security, they're not only foolish, but they're being very inconsiderate of the organization around them. There were certain things I wouldn't do. My security guy wanted me to wear a bullet proof vest when I went out. I wouldn't do that. He didn't want me to travel with CD plates. I didn't think that was a problem. I was fairly popular around the country. And Moi liked me a lot until that last meeting and sometimes would send police to guard me against my wishes. This happened three different times. Once they actually caught up with me. I was up near the Uganda border and a car followed us all around. He said he was worried about my safety because things between Kenya and Uganda were unsettled. Once when I headed up towards Somalia and I was staying at a friend's ranch. When I got there, there were eight policemen waiting, and I got rid of them. And once down at a game reserve, an American couple had been robbed and beaten and taken to the Tanzanian border. When they found out I was going down there they sent a police escort, which I evaded. I really didn't think that I needed it, and I didn't. It was manageable. I was never worried for my own personal safety. There were a couple of incidents of people being robbed. It was very different from what it is now.

Q: You left there in 1989. Whither?

CONSTABLE: I came back and was Diplomat-in-Residence at Georgetown for two years teaching African politics and government, diplomacy, working with David Newsom, getting back together with my family after my husband and I were on separate continents for seven years. It was nice to be in the same house waiting to see what would happen next, and I should probably mention two things during that period.

One, there seemed to be a problem finding a job for me which was odd because it had never happened in my career. I was toying with the idea of retiring after Kenya because of Peter's health. And then I thought, no, I'd like to do one more job in the building because I've always enjoyed working in the building. And there seemed to be a problem with it. Now, after I left Kenya the post got a somewhat rough inspection. It was a funny inspection in many ways in that it indicated that all the policy stuff was being done fine, the political relationship, the diplomatic, the economic, all the consular, but there were two areas of criticism. One was admin. There were a lot of minor lapses. For example, we had the wrong person chairing the spouse employment committee. I mean, give me a break. We had very good admin counselors and it was run as well as it could be run.

The other area was morale. The inspectors...I still find this hard to believe, thought that I should have agreed to a commissary, and a differential. There was something else. There's an allowance, I can't remember the name of it, where you get to bring in an extra 1500 pounds.

Q: It's a baggage allowance, professional books. That is because of local conditions you need to bring in other things.

CONSTABLE: My deputy and I had been wrestling with the morale issue for the whole three years I was there, and we tried this, and we tried that. We gave parties and we counseled the people. We tried to organize community stuff, and nothing seemed to work. And as I was getting ready to leave I said to my deputy, you know, we ought to look at something. Is there something we could do that would be a real gesture that is at least semi-justifiable in a way that the 10% is not. And we hit on the weight allowance of 1500 extra pounds which people had also been asking for. And I thought, why don't I let my successor do this. And this is what I talked to Smith about, and I explained the morale problem, and I said, they already think I'm an ogre, and why don't you come in and you do this. The inspectors thought I should open a commissary. They thought I should have supported the 10%, and they argued that a recommendation on this weight allowance had been sitting on my desk and that I had refused to act on it. I told the inspector, "of course, I didn't act on it. I left it for my successor. I thought it would be a nice way for him to get started". I was so furious. And then they slammed my deputy who had done a fabulous job.

I went to Sherman Funk, whom I had known before and said, this is grossly unfair. And he did a couple of things. First, he tore up the rating on my deputy. It was the only time I know of in the history of the IG's office, maybe something has happened recently, that an evaluation on an employee in the field has been ripped up and thrown away. And he indicated that he thought in retrospect that I was right about some of this. And he offered me a job. I said, well, gee Sherman...yes, I'll do it, but you need to understand that I'm not doing the kind of inspection your guys did in Kenya. I don't believe in it. None of this slash and burn stuff. Anyway, I went to work for him as an inspector and I was pulled off that to be an assistant secretary when the Democrats won in '92.

In the meantime, we discovered that the inspection had nothing to do with my situation. That I had offended Jim Baker way back when I was doing all that economic stuff, and Baker just didn't want me in the building. Fair enough. And Baker leaves, Christopher comes back. He remembered me from Carter days, and there I was.

When I was nominated to be assistant secretary the Foreign Relations Committee wanted to know about the Kenya inspection. Sherman Funk wrote a letter to Claiborne Pell in which he said, and I quote in part: This is hard for me to say, but she was right and we were wrong. If I had it to do over again, I wouldn't have put any of it in. That was nice.

And that comes back to your earlier theme. I think there was an expectation that as a woman I would be more soft on these issues than my two male predecessors had been. My position didn't deviate from theirs, or my successors who never opened a commissary. Anyway, the Democrats came back in, a lot of people came back in the building I knew.

Q: Two years would have taken you up to '91ish, and a little inspection time.

CONSTABLE: I did some inspecting.

Q: So we're up to '93.

CONSTABLE: We can whip over that. We can talk about the inspection corps. I think it's a very useful function if it's done right. I think it's worse than useless if it's done wrong. There was a follow-up visit, by the way, and somebody in the IG told me that this particular team had been discredited in a couple of other places.

I had been talked about by somebody, I don't know who, in 1989 for OES.

Q: OES stands for?

CONSTABLE: Oceans and Environment, Science and Technology, one of the functional bureaus in the building. There was an assistant secretary by the name of Fred Bernthal, from the National Science Foundation, I think, a scientist by background, and they were looking to replace him. They replaced him with Buff Bohlen, an environmentalist from the World Wildlife Fund. But my name circulated apparently because I got a couple of calls from Washington saying, you're on this list. Well, I didn't think too much about that and came back to Georgetown. And then I was off in Nigeria inspecting when I got a call from the Director General, did I want OES, and I said, you bet. Then Tim Wirth called and interviewed me and I came back and ran that bureau.

I tried to revive the place a little bit. It had a hard time during the Reagan years both because the Reagan administration was a little hard on the environment, and because the leadership had been quite weak ever your earlier theme. left.

Q: One of the men there, a nuclear man...

CONSTABLE: Yes, Jim Malone.

Q: ... a noted terrible administrator.

CONSTABLE: He was the worst. But there had been weak leadership. The bureau was somewhat demoralized. There were some strong people doing really nifty work, they tended to be isolated working on particular issues. So I wanted to revitalize the bureau.

And the other thing I wanted to try to do was to introduce an economic dimension into the environmental agenda, and persuade people like Tim Wirth and Al Gore that you needed to have a balance, you needed to meld these issues into the broader foreign policy agenda, and not deal with them as a single override issues. That was not a view that Tim Wirth, or some people in the White House shared, so we were at loggerheads on that. Tim Wirth and I fell out after about a year and a half. It was an accumulation of things. I was not green enough for him.

Q: You're really talking about in present parlance, you weren't a dedicated environmentalist. Your economic training probably got in your way.

CONSTABLE: Economic training got in the way, my management approach to things got in the way. I was always trying to find a consensus, and also, I don't know how you would label this, frankly, I think it's just being professional. If you're working in a senior policy position in the Department of State, you work for the President and the Secretary of State. And when you're in a position where your immediate boss is at odds with the Secretary of State, it puts you in an awkward position. And Tim was at odds with Warren Christopher on a number of things. He used to refer to Warren Christopher in his own staff meetings in terms that were unprintable, which I thought was inappropriate. Right after I took over OES we had an issue involving the National Environmental Protection Act which is a piece of legislation that requires environmental impact assessments to be done before certain activity can be undertaken in the United States. And the environmentalists had sued the government arguing that activities in Antarctica should come under this provision. Antarctica is not U.S. territory. So the State Department, and others, argued that it shouldn't apply overseas for obvious reasons. And we lost. This happened before I arrived. Then the issue became whether we should support an appeal, and Christopher, who was on board, and the lawyers wanted to support an appeal. Tim Wirth felt that we shouldn't support an appeal. And Tim, in public, bragged about rolling Warren Christopher on this. God, I don't know why he didn't get fired. I was shocked by that. Wirth went to Al Gore, and they knew each other from the Hill, and basically said, Al, this guy is wrong.

Q: They were both senators.

CONSTABLE: So when I took over OES I went to Tom Donilon, who was Christopher's special guy, and I said, Tom, I just want you to know that I'm not going to play the way my predecessor played. And then I helped broker with my successor, Eileen Claussen, while she was over at the White House, a compromise on the issue which had enough support around town so that we were able to put the issue back in the box. I told Tim about this, and Tim didn't like it. I'm not sure I was as politically astute as I should have been with Tim. I tried to be very rational about it. I said, Tim, if you and Warren Christopher disagree on this, then either you have to change his mind, or you have to support his position. I don't care which you do, but if we're going to go with NEPA internationally, that is 180 degrees from where the Secretary of State is. Do you want me to do a memo for you? How do you want to handle this? And he just snarled. It was that sort of thing. He didn't like that, didn't like Foreign Service officers. I remember counseling some of my colleagues, don't fall on your sword to support a Foreign Service officer with Tim Wirth. Try and do it discreetly in some other way without confronting him about it because he thinks we're all jerks. But I didn't take my own advice on that. I had some FSOs working for me and I'd say, Tim, they're fabulous, you just don't know them. And, of course, that was just adding support to his perspective which was she's just one of them. I assumed that was what was going on, it's hard to know.

As this falling out was developing, and as it became clear that Tim wanted a political successor...Peter's health was deteriorating, and I had always said that the instant his health started slipping, that I was going to retire. So that's what I did. I think that if his health had not been bad, I might have done one more embassy and then retired. I don't think my career would have been substantially different. And I still look back on it all, and I think, my goodness when I came into the Foreign Service in 1957 as a little FSO-8, if anyone would have told me that I was going to be an ambassador and an assistant secretary, I would have said, you are crazy. I don't know, maybe it was a different set of expectations as a woman.

Q: It was. Well, Elinor, this has been a great deal of fun. I've enjoyed this. I'm sorry it's over.

CONSTABLE: I can't believe it.

End of interview